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3.	<b>Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites</b>

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Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites		PA 12
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Value</b>	
Broadwater Warren Restoration	£ 498,096	
<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<b>Project Aim</b>	
 a million voices for nature	To restore lowland heathland habitat, and associated valley mire and ancient woodland, at Broadwater Warren; and to increase public access to, and understanding of, this nationally important habitat.	



### What Was Delivered?

The RSPB purchased Broadwater Warren in 2007 through an HLF Main Grant, prior to the commencement of the WFR LPS. However, as one of the Ridge's four medieval forests and a target for nationally significant heathland restoration, the site was an obvious key project in the WFR LP Scheme. The RSPB has a long-term vision for Broadwater Warren, and the three years of activity undertaken between 2009 and 2011 were, in effect, the start of a 10-year restoration plan.

Seasonal heathland restoration works, planned for autumn 2009, were unfortunately delayed for a year pending detailed agreement of an Environmental Impact Assessment and granting of a Felling Licence with the Forestry Commission. This has meant less young and mature conifer clearance was undertaken within the WFR LPS than planned, but, utilising other funding sources in legacy work, the RSPB will still achieve the same overall restoration outputs, but to a longer timescale.

Utilising national RSPB expertise of similar scale work, conifers were cleared from targeted areas through a mix of traditional forwarder harvesting of mature trees, and mulching of young natural regeneration from areas harvested in the late 1990's. Follow-up work, such as soil scraping and chemical treatment of emerging bracken, was subsequently undertaken. Through 2011, one large grazing paddock of 60ha was created, encompassing all areas already cleared of conifer. In April 2012, Exmoor ponies were introduced to undertake summer grazing; with enclosure control areas also established to monitor their grazing effectiveness.

With approximately half of the 180ha site planned to be managed as non-heath habitats, considerable other habitat management work was also undertaken. Extensive *Rhododendron ponticum* clearance was carried out in the ancient woodland areas of the site. A former duck-shooting decoy pond was restored to an extensive waterbody, and further, smaller ponds created. Management works were also undertaken to an important valley mire habitat in the centre of the site.

### Key Outputs

- 31.5ha of young and mature conifer.
- 4.9ha of soil scrapes to enhance heathland regeneration.
- 3.5km of stockproof fencing erected and grazing regime established.
- 3 new ponds created and 2 existing ponds enhanced.
- Over 30ha of *Rhododendron* cleared/sprayed.
- 700m of all-ability path created.
- 4km Nature Trail and 3.5km History Trail created and waymarked.
- 9 interpretation boards installed.
- History Trail and General Site Leaflets designed and printed.
- 45 site learning activities and open days staged, with 1,206 attendees.
- 9 off-site events staged, with 484 attendees.
- 2 Professionals training days delivered, with 38 attendees.
- 173 different volunteers contributed 569 volunteering days.



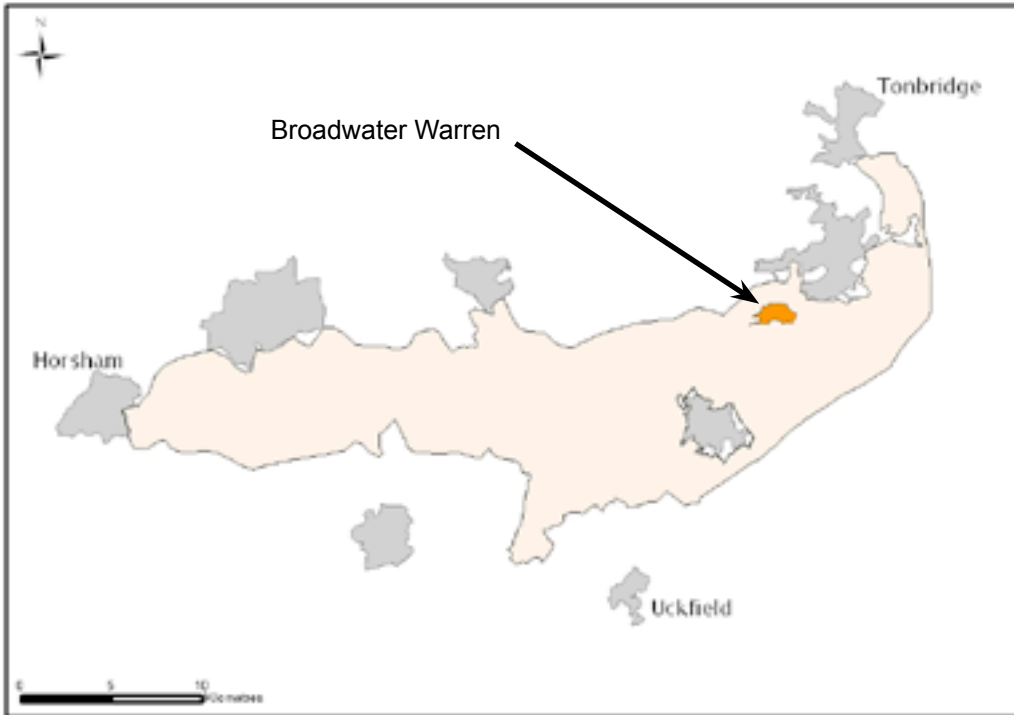
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*"It's difficult to imagine what [the reserve] will look like in the future, and a lot of us won't be around when it's at its best, but it's a gift to the future that we are all happy to give."*

RSPB volunteer on regional TV News

Community engagement work and enhanced visitor access were also key areas of the project. An all-ability trail was created leading away from the car park: the starting point for a 4km waymarked Nature Trail around the whole site. A crucial boardwalk was constructed to facilitate access through the valley mire area, and general and themed interpretation boards, along with more transitory management information notices, were designed and installed.

From a pre-WFR archaeological survey, Broadwater Warren was identified as being particularly rich in extant features, including boundary banks, rabbit warrens, a 19th century rifle range and a WW2 Churchill tank turret! Consequently, a History Trail was developed, with its own self-guided leaflet and signage to name features. Previous military use of the site meant that site works undertaken needed checking for unexploded ordnance, as well as an archaeological watching brief for larger work.

An extensive programme of on- and off-site events was staged, to encourage engagement with, and learning about, the site's diverse heritage, including dawn chorus walks, fungi forays and archaeology guided walks. Some public events were held in conjunction with other WFR Partners – including The Company and the Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery – whilst an innovative professionals day, held in conjunction with the Woodland Trust's nearby Hargate Forest, looked at the ecological and archaeological constraints that can impinge on large-scale habitat enhancement.

*"The changes at Broadwater are amazing."*

*"What a wonderful place. Thanks so much for introducing us to its secrets."*

*"Since work started on clearing areas, with the aim of converting them back to heathland, the enjoyment of visiting Broadwater Warren has increased immensely. It is great to see woodlark again and enjoy the nightjars churring."*

Site visitors

Many events were led by local volunteers, and volunteer work parties were a regular and essential element of the delivery of the site's physical work programme. Training was also provided for volunteers, including partnership work with BTCV and Esus Forestry Training (see Training and Skills section).



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**A long military history**

All across the High Weald you can find evidence of military camps and operations from the 18th century through to the First and Second World Wars, and Broadwater Warren is no exception.

**The firing range**  
You are now on the firing range. This large embankment formed the butts, which housed the targets and stopped the bullets. If you were a soldier training here during the Second World War, you may have stood on the firing range, honing your rifle skills. In the First World War, you could have crunched (and possibly shivered) in one of the practice trenches found around the site.

**Protecting our heathland and our heritage...**  
The sandy soils along the High Weald ridges once supported numerous heaths. The aerial photograph (left) shows just how open the area was in 1947. The RSPB is now restoring much of this landscape. As well as benefiting rare and threatened wildlife like woodlarks and Dartford warblers, the work we're doing to restore the heathland is uncovering our human history and returning archaeological features to their original landscape context.

**Searching for clues**  
Aerial images such as this RAF photo taken in 1947 provided us valuable information, not just about military history, but also about how the landscape has changed. We've spoken to local people, who remember the area being used by troops in the Second World War. All these clues helped us to find evidence of our military heritage during surveys on the ground.

Our thanks go to the organisations who have supported our work on the Broadwater Warren History Trail. They have enabled us to discover, share and protect our archaeological heritage.

English Heritage, Forestry Commission, Gurney Charitable Trust, Kent High Weald Partnership, Sussex Wildlife Trust, The Company, Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery, Various RSPB Local Groups, WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project, Woodland Trust.



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## What Does the Future Hold?

The RSPB will manage and maintain the physical site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments. Given their restoration plans for the site and its long-term role as an RSPB nature reserve, however, their commitment extends considerably further than the next 10 years.

By the end of 2011, over 30ha of heathland had been recreated at Broadwater Warren within the WFR LPS. The site's 10 year target is 85ha and the RSPB will continue to work towards this target with autumn-based conifer clearance over the next few years. This will also lead to an increase in the area under grazing.

During the WFR LPS, annual site visitor numbers – measured through a car park traffic counter – increased to at least 50,000: considerably in excess of the target of 20, to 30,000. In part, this success was attributable to the high levels of site promotion and community involvement undertaken by the RSPB. Whilst visitor numbers are unlikely to continue to grow so rapidly, it is possible the RSPB will need to consider visitor pressure on the reserve, and more proactively manage for it.

The strong and enthusiastic volunteer base is one of the big successes of Broadwater's development. The RSPB will continue to manage and nurture this key group, investing in their development and increasing the benefits they can deliver on the reserve.



© RSPB



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### Partnerships

- ✓ BTCV
- ✓ East Sussex County Council (Historic Environment)
- ✓ Kent High Weald Partnership
- ✓ Sussex Pony Grazing and Conservation Trust
- ✓ Sussex Wildlife Trust
- ✓ The Company
- ✓ Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery
- ✓ Various RSPB Local Groups
- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project
- ✓ Woodland Trust

**Match funding** : Defra (Higher Level Stewardship), English Heritage, Forestry Commission, GEAR, GrantScape, Gurney Charitable Trust, SITA Trust, Sustainable Development Fund (operated by High Weald JAC), timber / woodchip sales, The Veolia Environmental Trust, 10 year management and maintenance costs, plus volunteers.

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Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites		PA 04
<b>Project Name</b>		<b>Value</b>
Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods Restoration		£ 183,871
<b>Delivery Partner</b>		<b>Project Aim</b>
		To restore the original lowland heath habitat to Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods, and to increase public access to, enjoyment of and understanding of the site and its important heathland habitat and wildlife.



© Horsham District Council



© Horsham District Council



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### What Was Delivered?

Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods is a 45ha public open space, hard on the urban edge of Horsham. It divides into two clear areas: Leechpool Wood – predominantly ancient woodland with considerable Victorian influences; and Owlbeech Wood – formerly heathland, and cleared of conifers by Horsham District Council (HDC) just prior to the commencement of the WFR LPS. Based on demand by existing visitors for considerable enhancements, it was HDC’s aim through the WFR LPS to upgrade the two Woods to become Horsham’s premier countryside site. HDC feel this has been very successfully achieved.

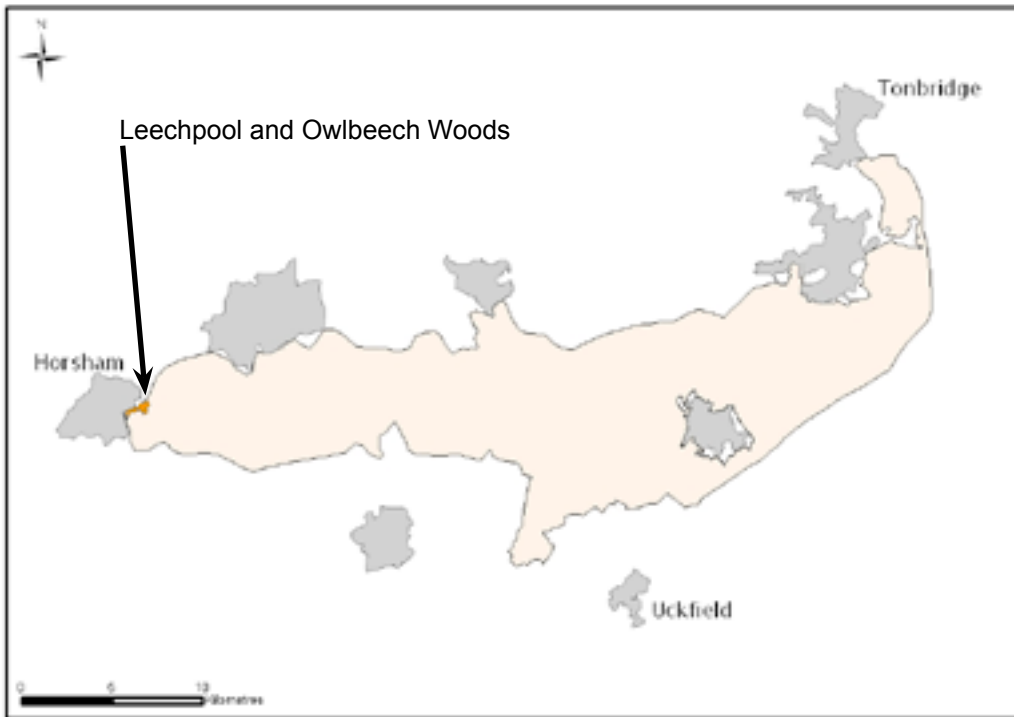
In the chastened times of reducing local authority budgets, volunteers played a pivotal role in the delivery of the restoration project. On average, more than one volunteer task per week, throughout the whole three years of delivery, was staged in conjunction with the Horsham Green Gym and Gatwick Greenspace Partnership. Tasks ranged from typical volunteer work – such as invasive vegetation and path clearance – through to skilled work; including seat and boardwalk installation and the construction of living willow sculptures.

At the start of the project in 2009, Owlbeech Wood was a recently cleared conifer plantation, with regenerating heather being outcompeted by emerging birch and bracken. Project work hence focused on birch and bracken control by physical and chemical means, along with the establishment of grazing. Other invasive species around the site – notably *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Prunus laurocerasus* – were also physically and chemically controlled.

Numerous constraints around the site’s urban edge location and its dog walking popularity meant that the grazing was very carefully designed. Four grazing compartments were created inside of the main boundary and internal circulation paths, so that dogs and people were not in immediate contact with the grazing animals. After initial trials with tenant grazier cattle, the decision was taken to purchase Hebridean Sheep; which were better suited to the site and could be seasonally rotated around other Horsham District Council locations.

### Key Outputs

- 3.5ha of invasive species controlled: rhododendron, laurel and bracken.
- 11.5ha of heathland brought into sustainable grazing, plus further 3.5ha enhanced manually.
- 750lin. m of boardwalks and steps installed to enhance site access.
- 1.3km of other site access paths enhanced.
- 5 waymarked trails installed, totalling 8.0km.
- 1 Sculpture Trail installed on site, with 13 sculptures designed by artists, volunteers and local school children.
- 3 site interpretation boards designed and installed.
- New site leaflet designed, with 10,000 print run.
- 37 public events staged, with 765 adult and child attendees.
- 160 volunteers contributed over £61,700 of input.



© Horsham District Council



*"We set out in the WFR LPS to make Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods Horsham's premier countryside site. We feel we have achieved this ... and more! The site has increased hugely in popularity, and its numerous pedestrian entrances and easy accessibility from housing means it gives residents easy and frequent access to their natural and cultural heritage."*

Horsham DC Site Manager

Two llamas were very successfully added to this flock; to not only increase the range of invasive vegetation grazed, but also to act as "bodyguards" to the sheep in case of any errant dog worrying. The llamas proved very popular with visitors, and became local celebrities when a misguided Daily Telegraph leader questioned why a local authority should be buying llamas in times of economic hardship!

Poor and eroded access paths were also a 2009 visitor issue with the site. Hence, there was considerable capital investment in steps, boardwalks and surfacing in key locations, to enhance the visitor experience.

Building on this provision of visitor facilities, an innovative sculpture trail was created through an exciting partnership with two local secondary schools. Art pupils worked with artists-in-residence to create evocative willow sculptures for specific locations: designed to slowly decompose back into the site. Other artists created more permanent pieces in



stone or wood. In total, 13 sculptures were installed. They were launched at a highly successful family event, attended by the HLF, in late 2010, and interpreted through a downloadable Sculpture Trail leaflet. Site interpretation was also provided through the production of more traditional interpretation boards and a site leaflet.

Guided walks and family events were staged by the site rangers. Additionally, partnership working with the Forest Schools project (see PA06, Learning in Schools) saw over 20 bushcraft sessions staged at the site: delivered by Gatwick Greenspace Partnership's Forest Schools Co-ordinator.

*"My son might be too shy to say this, but he has really enjoyed creating his site willow sculpture. It has given him motivation in the mornings to get up and go to school."*

Proud Mum at Sculpture Trail Launch Event

Without a doubt, the Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods Restoration project has been highly successful. The Sculpture Trail, enhanced access and on-site grazing have all drawn new visitors to the site. Unfortunately, because of the theft of the site traffic counter, this increase cannot be quantified. But, anecdotally, the Site Manager estimates at least a doubling in visitor numbers during the three year project.



© Same Sky

**Leechpool & Owlbeech Woods** Horsham District Council

**Great Spotted Woodpecker (Woodland)**  
A large black and white bird which sometimes visits gardens and bird feeders, known for its characteristic drumming on hollow trees to mark a territory.

**Bluebell (Woodland)**  
This perennial favourite forms a stunning blue spring-time carpet in recently cleared areas of Leechpool Woods.

**Yellowhammer (Heathland)**  
An unmistakable canary-yellow bird which has recently started breeding on site. Male Yellowhammers sing a distinctive song said to sound like 'A little bit of bread and no cheese!'

**Grass Snake (Wetland)**  
Found near ponds, streams and heathland (as well as grassland), their numbers are decreasing as these important habitats disappear. These snakes can grow to over a metre in length.

**Golden-ringed Dragonfly (Wetland)**  
A rare species seen in the slow-flowing streams which run through the Woods.

**Common Lizard (Heathland)**  
Often seen basking on logs in the heathland sun, they mainly feed on small insects. They give birth to live young, whereas most other lizards lay eggs.

**Green Tiger Beetle (Heathland)**  
An iridescent green beetle, often seen in summer glinting in the sun on heathland paths. It has large eyes for hunting and makes short buzzing flights when disturbed.

Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods consists mainly of **heathland**, **woodland** and **wetland**. Each habitat supports different wildlife and some of the plants and animals are very rare. It is important to protect and manage the variety of habitats to support the range of species.

Photo Credits: Great Spotted Woodpecker, John Wilks; Bluebell, Ted Attree; Yellowhammer, Jacob Everitt; Grass Snake, Horsham District Council



© Horsham District Council

## What Does the Future Hold?

Horsham District Council will manage and maintain the physical site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments.

One of the challenges over this period could be increased visitor pressure on the site; given its huge increase in popularity brought on by the restoration project, and the likelihood that visitor numbers will continue to increase. This will be a focus for the Site Manager and his Rangers.

*"The Horsham Green Gym group has hugely enjoyed the range of opportunities the restoration project has presented: from understanding the detail of heathland management and learning to willow weave, through to investigating the site's past with the WFR's Historic Environment Awareness Project Officer."*

Horsham Green Gym  
Volunteer Leader

There is considerable potential for follow-on, legacy projects on the site, such as more arts-inspired enhancements. These will be investigated, resource implications assessed, and prioritised based on financial and other demands. Clearly, with such a well-developed volunteer base available, those that can be delivered through volunteers are more likely to be initiated.

The delivery work between 2009 and 2012 has helped consolidate an already fledgling partnership between Horsham DC, West Sussex County Council and Gatwick Greenspace Partnership. Reflecting the current public-sector climate, the three organisations are already planning further partnership working.



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## Partnerships

- ✓ Forest School
- ✓ Gatwick Greenspace Partnership
- ✓ Horsham Green Gym
- ✓ Millais School
- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project

**Match funding** : Horsham District Council, 10 year management and maintenance costs, plus volunteers.

## Contact

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Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites		PA 05
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Value</b>	
Forest Footsteps Across the Ridge: Sheffield Forest (excl. interpretation)	£ 24,198	
<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<b>Project Aim</b>	
	To create and link heathy woodland and conservation margins, and to improve and upgrade pedestrian access within Sheffield Forest.	



© Forestry Commission



© Forestry Commission

### What Was Delivered?

Whilst the 120ha Sheffield Forest is classified as a Plantation on Ancient Woodland (PAWS) site, it contains some heathland assemblages that historically link it with Ashdown Forest to the north. Consequently, conifer and scrub removal was undertaken, with follow-up bracken spraying, to create an additional 2ha of “heathy wood”. This clearance included ride widening to encourage butterflies, birds and bats. There was also pond and wet woodland creation in the southern part of the site, enhancing an historic quarrying site and providing standing open water.

Public access is quite low-key at Sheffield Forest – with no formal car park, for instance. However, main tracks and paths in the south of the site were narrow, overgrown and degraded and hence were enhanced through regrading and widening; to improve the visitor experience.

Surveys also formed a key part of the project.

An Ecological Survey was undertaken in-house by the FC Regional Ecologist and Wildlife Ranger. It focused on vegetation (trees, shrubs and ground flora), invasive plants, veteran trees, butterflies, reptiles, small mammals, dormice, bats and birds. The FC staff gained considerable professional benefit from undertaking this large-scale survey, rather than the more usual practice of contracting to a consultant.

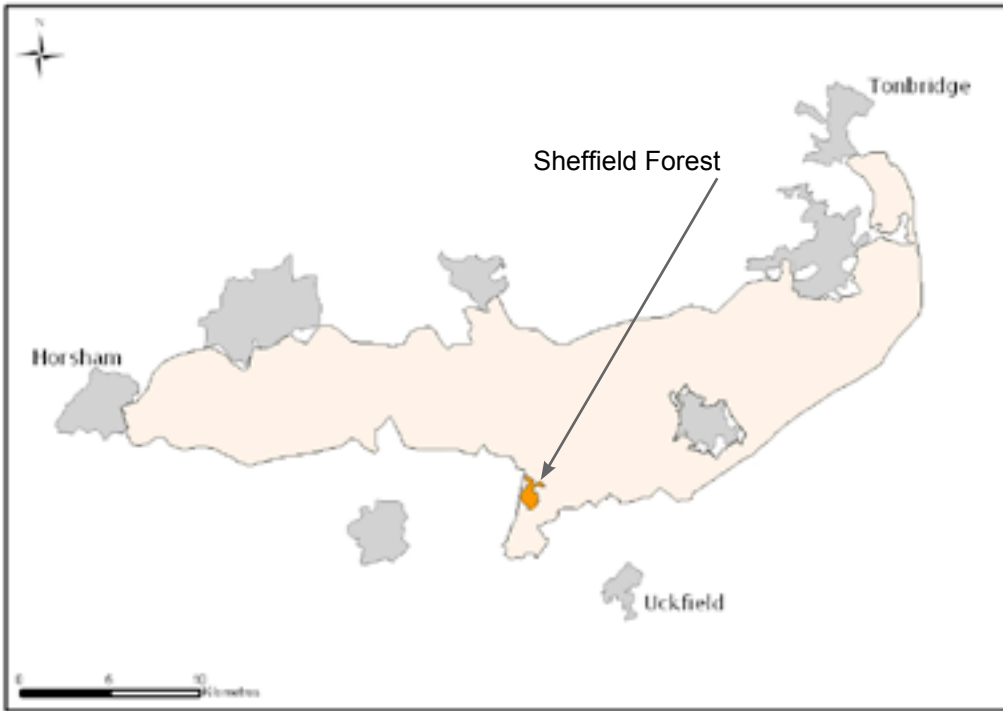
An extensive Archaeological Survey was also carried out, having been re-programmed to make use of the Scheme’s delayed LiDAR survey (see PA27, Understanding and Conserving the Historic Environment). The East Sussex CC County Archaeologist assisted with production of the tender brief, hence ensuring results would fully complement the Historic Environment Record (HER). 190 features were recorded; most synonymous with an historic wood intensively exploited over many centuries for timber, charcoal, stone, sand and some limited pasture. Features mapped included many saw pits and charcoal platforms, sunken trackways, quarries, and evidence for three early bloomeries. This rich archaeological heritage became the theme for the site’s welcome interpretation board (see combined FC interpretation, Public Celebration and Learning).

### Key Outputs

- 4.0km of access tracks and paths improved.
- 2.0km of ride-side habitat enhancements.
- 2.0ha of “heathy wood” enhancements.
- 4 ponds and associated wet woodland habitat created.
- 1 Archaeological Survey undertaken.
- 1 Ecological Survey undertaken.

*“The archaeological and ecological surveys have been invaluable in informing future management. Through interpretation, the fascinating history of the site has been brought to life and made accessible to the users of Sheffield Forest.”*

Forestry Commission



© Forestry Commission



© Forestry Commission

## What Does the Future Hold?

The Forestry Commission will manage and maintain the physical site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments.

Both of the surveys undertaken included important sustainability and legacy elements. The Ecological Survey included the mapping of invasive species – himalayan balsam, rhododendron, laurel and skunk cabbage – which will be targeted with appropriate control measures. Additionally, generic conservation management principles were set, as well as a five-year programme of more detailed management activities. These are linked to the site’s overarching Forest Design Plan.

In conjunction with the County Archaeologist, the Archaeological Survey results have been developed into a “constraints map”. Using a simple green, amber, red

“traffic light” system, areas of archaeological features have been mapped; placing constraints on FC site operations appropriate to the importance of the features in a national / regional / local perspective. This constraints mapping is being incorporated into the site management plan.

*“Accessibility has been greatly improved by this project and important environmental features enhanced.”*

Forestry Commission



© Forestry Commission

## Partnerships

- ✓ BTCV
- ✓ East Sussex County Council (Historic Environment)
- ✓ Sussex Biological Records Centre
- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project

*Match funding* : Forestry Commission, including 10year management and maintenance costs.

## Contact

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Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites		PA 15
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Value</b>	
Pathways to Tudor Heritage: Birchden Wood (excl. interpretation)	£ 50,495	
<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<b>Project Aim</b>	
	<p>To improve access through Birchden Wood to Harrison’s Rocks: enabling the public to explore their natural heritage, and raising awareness of a unique and nationally important feature.</p>	



### What Was Delivered?

A co-ordinated suite of access and biodiversity enhancements were undertaken in this Forestry Commission woodland between 2009 and 2011. Extensive site interpretation, reported elsewhere in this Monitoring Report, has also contributed greatly to the enhanced public access to the site (see combined FC interpretation, Public Celebration and Learning).

Birchden Wood is an important gateway to the well-known sandstone outcrop of Harrison’s Rocks, owned by Sport England and leased to the British Mountaineering Council (BMC). But access around the Wood itself was poor before the WFR LPS. A 1.5km circular Easy Access Trail was constructed; providing wheelchair and buggy access from the car park towards the southern edge of the site. Six DDA-compliant benches were installed along the Trail – to provide welcome resting places for young and old alike. The Trail formed one of the Parent Toddler Walk routes in the Family Fun – Parent and Toddler project (see PA51, Public Celebration and Learning). Extensive ride-widening was also carried out along the Trail; to create a more open, enjoyable and welcoming visitor experience, and reduce drip-line damage to the crushed stone surfacing.

The age structure of the site’s woodlands was heavily affected by the 1987 Great Storm and, consequently, extensive coppice coupes were created in each of the three winter periods within the project; to create greater structural and age diversity. Uneconomic timber was stockpiled for its deadwood habitat value, whilst commercial timber extraction reduced the overall costs of this coppicing. Additionally, three, more intimate, woodland glades were created in 2009, with subsequent chemical control of bracken regrowth, and conifer thinning was undertaken over 12ha of the 42ha site.

The main visitor access to site is through a large car park. Whilst owned by the Forestry Commission, the car park has historically been leased to the BMC for Harrison’s Rocks’ access. It was planned within the WFR LPS that the lease would be terminated and the car park would come back under FC control, hence allowing car park enhancements to be undertaken. Unfortunately, legal issues precluded this happening, but it is still an aspiration that this important gateway will be enhanced in the future.

### Key Outputs

- 1.5km of all-ability Easy Access Trail created.
- 6 benches installed along Trail.
- 12.0ha of coppicing undertaken to initiate a rotational coppice cycle.
- 1.0ha of woodland glades created.
- 12.6ha of conifer thinning undertaken.



*“To start with I was a bit dubious about the new easy access trail. Now I love it. Especially in the wet weather we have been having lately!”*

Daily local dog walker



### What Does the Future Hold?

The Forestry Commission will manage and maintain the site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments.

Dialogue will continue with the BMC over the lease arrangements for the car park; with the aspiration that the car park can be improved, to make a more appealing visitor welcome.



*"We have had enormously positive feedback from everyone I have met whilst on site. They all seem to love the interpretive material and the new experience of being able to walk safely and easily, in all weathers, around a beautiful woodland."*

Site Forester, Forestry Commission

Promotion of Birchden Wood will also be undertaken by the Forestry Commission – especially through its website – to increase the popularity of this under-visited site now that it offers exceptional all-ability access and a suite of exciting interpretation that has a huge appeal to the “parents with young children” audience. The more informal access to the stunning sandstone outcrops at the adjoining Harrison’s Rocks will also be promoted.



### Partnerships

- ✓ British Mountaineering Council
- ✓ ESAMP
- ✓ Harrison’s Rocks Management Group
- ✓ Kent High Weald Partnership
- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project

*Match funding*: Forestry Commission, including 10 year management and maintenance costs.

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Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites		PA 10
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Value</b>	
Pathways to Natural Heritage: Weir Wood Reservoir	£110,779	
<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<b>Project Aim</b>	
	<p>To undertake access, infrastructure and habitat improvements in and around Weir Wood Reservoir, and to increase volunteer opportunities.</p>	



© East Sussex County Council

### What Was Delivered?

Whilst owned by Southern Water as a major water supply reservoir, the land around Weir Wood is managed for access and biodiversity in partnership by East Sussex County Council, with the help of The Friends of Weir Wood.

Initial site works focused on reconstructing a significant length of the Sussex Border Path on the northern shore of the Reservoir. This public footpath was almost impassable in wet conditions. It was hence culverted, raised and surfaced to all-ability standards in a partnership working arrangement with West Sussex County Council, within whose area it just fell. This opened up circular access around the Reservoir and encouraged greater usage, including as part of a “Welly Walk” from a local primary school.

Both hedgelaying of existing hedges, and planting of new hedges, was carried out over three successive winter periods. The work was undertaken by volunteers, and the hedgelaying work was developed into training sessions for the volunteers through the engagement of a local, retired hedgelayer. Volunteers also undertook significant other habitat and access enhancements around the site, including: construction of a tern nesting raft, seat installation, scrub clearance, development of a picnic area and vegetation clearance from footpaths.

Welcome A1 interpretation boards were designed and installed at three locations around the Reservoir – giving introductory information about the site.

Three further A2 boards were also installed; with specific themes of Weir Wood wildlife, the local iron industry, and the creation of the Reservoir in the 1950’s. These were designed with significant input from both the Friends of Weir Wood and the Weald Forest Ridge LP Scheme Management Team.

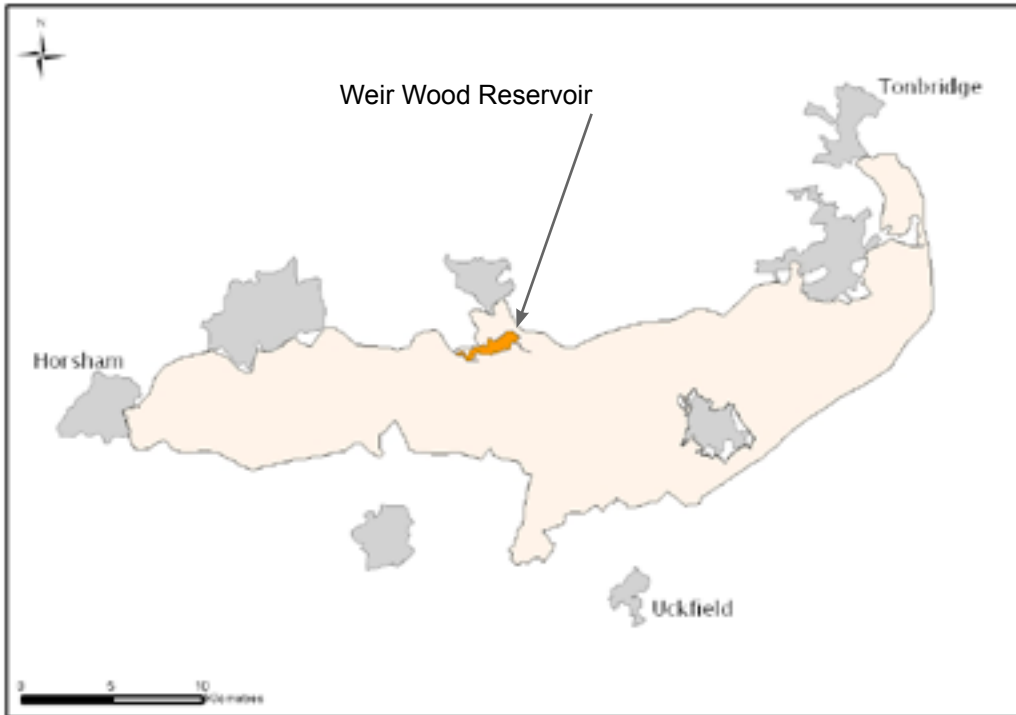
Finally, a series of guided walks and Open Days were staged by the East Sussex County Council Site Ranger, throughout the three summers of the project. These included a launch of the Sussex Border Path improvements, staged in July 2010.

### Key Outputs

- 1.07km of public footpath rebuilt to all-ability standards.
- 3 seats installed on rebuilt footpath.
- 530 lin. m. of existing hedges laid.
- 360 lin. m. of new native hedges planted.
- 2,100m<sup>2</sup> of scrub cleared.
- 1 tern nesting raft installed.
- 6 interpretation boards installed at locations around Reservoir.
- 21 guided walks and 3 Open Days delivered.
- 333 adults and children attended walks and Open Days.
- 15 days hedgelaying training delivered to 70 recipients.

*“The Friends have really benefited from the site’s involvement in the Weald Forest Ridge LPS. In particular, it’s enabled East Sussex CC to lever in significant funding, to bolster the relatively small amounts that we can contribute as a voluntary organisation.”*

Friends of Weir Wood



### What Does the Future Hold?

East Sussex County Council is contractually bound to manage and maintain the physical site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments. They will continue to work with Southern Water and the Friends of Weir Wood to ensure that the biodiversity and access improvements that have been achieved through the project are maintained for the benefit of wildlife and visitors to the site.

*“This project has engendered excellent partnership working between our Authority and East Sussex CC; to bring about much needed footpath improvements on a shared long distance trail. Without the partnership approach and pooling of resources, neither authority could have achieved the same result on its own.”*

Rights of Way Team, West Sussex County Council

*“For us, it’s not just the Reservoir that has benefited from the LP Scheme. Our staff have also been able to network with fellow professionals and attend excellent training courses, workshops and events provided by the Scheme.”*

East Sussex County Council

#### Weir Wood iron

The High Weald was the most important iron producing area in Roman Britain and again in Tudor times. The Medway Valley at Weir Wood Reservoir contains sites dating to both periods.

**Romans**  
The first iron records for the area are of Roman origin and have been dated by pottery finds to the late first and second centuries AD. There is a large mound of slag from a Roman furnace at Walesbeech, along the south shore of the Reservoir.



Tip slag waste from the Roman furnace has been found, as well as pottery remains from the period.



Iron still shows its presence in some of the small streams that run down to the Weir Wood valley.

**Tudors**  
The whole landscape of the area would have been busy with charcoal making, iron ore mining, fiery furnaces and the clanging hammers of forges. Tracks would have been teeming with carts moving fuel, raw materials and iron produce, including cannons destined for British military campaigns, such as fighting the Spanish Armada.



**Today**  
The Medway Valley now provides our most valuable commodity – water. The Reservoir has become a place prized for wildlife and recreation, as well as being a beautiful part of the modern landscape.

When iron production flourished here, the landscape would have looked, sounded and smelt very different. But the Roman and Tudor eras are just a couple of periods in a history spanning thousands of years. How might this valley have looked at other times?

To find out more about the High Weald visit [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org)



### Partnerships

- ✓ Friends of Weir Wood
- ✓ Southern Water
- ✓ Weald Meadows Initiative
- ✓ West Sussex County Council

*Match funding* : Friends of Weir Wood, West Sussex County Council, plus volunteers.

### Contact



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Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites	PA 18
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Value</b>
Eridge Rocks Habitat Enhancements	£ 10,245

<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<b>Project Aim</b>
 	To improve woodland diversity through ride widening; to benefit the lower plants of the sandstone rocks through rhododendron removal, and to increase public understanding of the importance of the site through interpretation.



© Sussex Wildlife Trust



### What Was Delivered?

Eridge Rocks are well-known sandrock outcrops in the WFR area and host a wide range of rare lower plants, including Tunbridge filmy fern. Invasive *Rhododendron ponticum* was removed from the rockfaces over three growing seasons to conserve these lower plants. Specialist contractors, using climbing equipment and winter access, cut top growth and followed-up with chemical stump treatment.

Selected rides were widened in the surrounding woodland of the nature reserve: to encourage greater floristic diversity and enhance invertebrate habitats – particularly for mobile species such as butterflies. This work was co-ordinated with the adjoining RSPB project at Broadwater Warren (see PA12, this section), to deliver landscape scale habitat connectivity. Halo felling was also undertaken around selected veteran trees.

Most visitors access the site from Eridge Green and a welcome interpretation board was installed here.

### What Does the Future Hold?

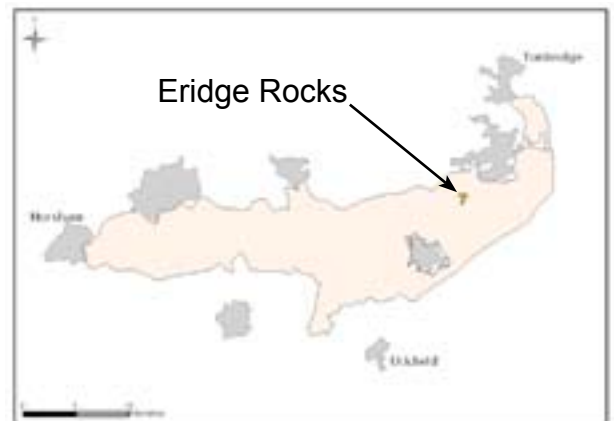
Sussex Wildlife Trust will manage and maintain the site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments and in conjunction with its Nature Reserve Management Plan.

### Key Outputs

- 700lin. m. of sandrock outcrops cleared of invasive rhododendron.
- 0.9ha of ride widening undertaken.
- Halo-felling undertaken around 5 veteran trees.
- 1 welcome interpretation board installed.

*"The works carried out at Eridge Rocks through the Weald Forest Ridge LPS have contributed greatly to biodiversity enhancements on the site."*

Sussex Wildlife Trust



### Partnerships

- ✓ East Sussex County Council (Historic Environment)
- ✓ Kent High Weald Partnership
- ✓ RSPB
- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project

*Match funding.* Sussex Wildlife Trust, including 10 year management and maintenance costs.

### Contact

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Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites		PA 19
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Value</b>	
Old Lodge Habitat Enhancements	£ 7,871	
<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<b>Project Aim</b>	
	To restore lowland heathland at Old Lodge Nature Reserve.	



© Sussex Wildlife Trust



© Sussex Wildlife Trust



© Sussex Wildlife Trust

### What Was Delivered?

Old Lodge is a central, 76ha nature reserve, managed under lease arrangements by Sussex Wildlife Trust within the wider Ashdown Forest SSSI, Special Area for Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). The WFR-supported site works focused on bracken eradication and restoration to heathland.

In summer 2010, a 1.2ha bracken scrape was undertaken, to remove the rhizome layer in some particularly dense bracken stands on site. Previous SWT experience at Old Lodge has shown this to be a very effective way of re-establishing heather from the subsoil seedbank. Additionally, through the summers of 2009 to 2011, almost 8ha of bracken was sprayed to chemically control less dense stands of this invasive plant.

As a wider Scheme benefit, East Sussex CC's County Archaeologist assisted SWT with additional archaeological survey work on site, utilising the Scheme's LiDAR survey data, to enhance their Higher Level Stewardship scheme.

### What Does the Future Hold?

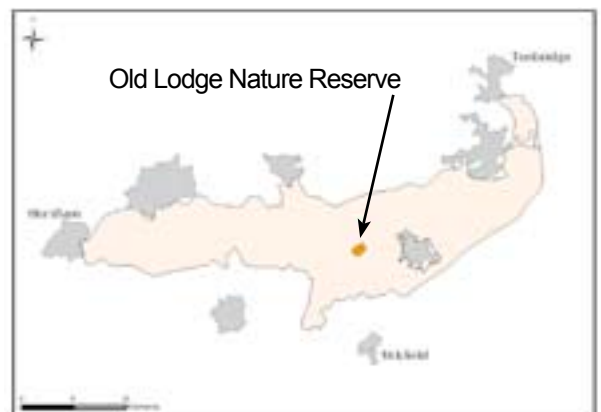
Sussex Wildlife Trust will manage and maintain the site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments and in conjunction with its Nature Reserve Management Plan. This will include monitoring heather establishment in the scraped area.

### Key Outputs

- 1.2ha of heathland restored through bracken scraping.
- 7.8ha of chemical bracken control undertaken.

*"Site benefits from engagement with the LPS were not just confined to heathland ecology. We also benefited hugely from access to the LiDAR survey, and could refine our Site Management Plan in the light of greater archaeological knowledge."*

Sussex Wildlife Trust



### Partnerships

- ✓ Conservators of Ashdown Forest
- ✓ East Sussex County Council (Historic Environment)
- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project

*Match funding:* Sussex Wildlife Trust, including 10 year management and maintenance costs.

### Contact

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Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites		PA 59
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Value</b>	
Developing the Community at Hargate Forest (in-part)	£ 26,119	
<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<b>Project Aim</b>	
	To increase awareness of, and the number and range of visitors to, Hargate Forest and to secure local community involvement in the site's long-term management.	



### What Was Delivered?

Site enhancements undertaken at Hargate Forest, as part of the broader site project, focused on two key areas. These enhancements were designed in conjunction with the community consultation on the site, and the development of the Friends of Hargate Forest (see other elements of the Hargate Forest project under Sections 5 and 6 of this Report).

The main pedestrian entrance from Broadwater Down, along with a secondary entrance, were improved: to create a more welcoming visitor experience. Enhanced surfacing and site furniture were installed, including RADAR-standard kissing gates. Welcome boards were also installed as part of the public celebration and learning element of the Hargate Forest project.

Two waymarked walking trails were created on site: both leading from the main pedestrian entrance. The one mile Green Route was designed for easier access, and had extensive re-grading and surfacing work undertaken. The circular, two mile Red Route was routed on predominantly unsurfaced rides. The Green Route formed one of the Parent Toddler Walk routes in the Family Fun – Parent and Toddler project (see PA51, Public Celebration and Learning).

Also, habitat management works were undertaken by the site volunteer group developed under the BTCV Inspiring People, Improving Places project (PA03, see Training and Skills).

### What Does the Future Hold?

The Woodland Trust will manage and maintain the site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments.

### Key Outputs

- 2 improved pedestrian entrances.
- 4.8km of waymarked trails created, including 1.6km of all ability trail.

*"One of my best moments was seeing a mum walking in the Forest – the first time she had ventured in with her buggy - and a wide-eyed child clearly enjoying the adventure!"*

Site Manager,  
Woodland Trust



### Partnerships

- ✓ BTCV
- ✓ Friends of Hargate Forest
- ✓ Kent High Weald Partnership

*Match funding.* Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, gifts in kind plus volunteers.

### Contact


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[www.visitwoods.org.uk](http://www.visitwoods.org.uk)

Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites		PA 22
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Value</b>	
Kingstanding Habitat Enhancements	£ 12,899	
<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<b>Project Aim</b>	
	To restore lowland heathland at Kingstanding: to improve biodiversity and conservation of this nationally important habitat and to prevent the spread of invasive non-native species into the wider Ashdown Forest landscape.	



© Sussex Police



© Sussex Police



© Sussex Police

### What Was Delivered?

Operated as a training facility by Sussex Police, Kingstanding is a 25ha heathland adjunct to the wider Ashdown Forest SSSI, Special Area for Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). The WFR-supported works were delivered by a former Sussex Police employee, acting as a volunteer site conservation manager.

Heathland restoration works were undertaken in four main areas:

- Invasive *Rhododendron ponticum*, alongside other invasive scrub, was removed by physical and chemical methods across the site.
- Numerous small-scale bracken scrapes were made; including along nutrient-rich fencelines to enhance heather spread from the adjacent Ashdown Forest.
- 0.5ha of invasive birch was felled.
- Volunteers, including officers and other Police staff, helped spread heather seed and transplant heather seedlings from local sources, to aid heathland re-establishment.

### What Does the Future Hold?

Sussex Police will manage and maintain the site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments and in conjunction with its site Management Plan. This will include monitoring heather establishment.

### Key Outputs

- In total, 20.0ha of heathland was enhanced through a varied mix of habitat improvement works, including bracken scrapes and invasive species control.
- 22 volunteers assisted with heathland enhancement work.

*"Ecologically, this site is part of the much wider Ashdown Forest. Inclusion within the Weald Forest Ridge LPS has enabled us to enhance our heathland habitat and achieved considerably wider biodiversity benefits."*

Volunteer Site Conservation Manager



### Partnerships

- ✓ Conservators of Ashdown Forest
- ✓ RSPB

*Match funding* : Sussex Police Authority (through Countryside Stewardship), plus volunteers.

### Contact

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Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites		PA 20
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Value</b>	
Forest Footsteps Across the Ridge: St Leonard's Forest (excl. interpretation)	£ 92,271	
<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<b>Project Aim</b>	
	To create and link existing areas of heathy woodland and conservation margins and to improve and upgrade pedestrian access within St Leonard's Forest.	



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### What Was Delivered?

This major (271 ha) wooded public open space had ecological and access enhancements undertaken, as well as an archaeological survey.

Connected to its medieval hunting forest history, some of the site's scattered heath areas were expanded and linked through debris removal and mowing, plus associated bracken control. Extensive *Rhododendron ponticum* growth was also treated. A SSSI gill woodland on the western boundary had temporary deer fencing installed, to remove deer browsing pressure and enable natural regeneration. This fencing will be moved to other areas of the site in future years.

The main visitor entry point to St Leonard's is a car park on its southern boundary. This and the entrance road were regraded and resurfaced, and the main access track into the Forest was similarly enhanced, as far as the central Mick's Cross.

The Archaeological Survey was re-programmed from 2009 to make use of the Scheme's delayed LiDAR survey (see PA27, Understanding and Conserving the Historic Environment). The East Sussex CC County Archaeologist assisted with production of the tender brief; working on behalf of his West Sussex colleagues and ensuring a consistency of approach with FC across the two counties.

Previously, St Leonard's had just 15 entries in the Historic Environment Record. The Survey identified a staggering 190 new records through its combination of LiDAR, desk-top study and field survey. The majority of new features were connected with either the Tudor iron industry or late medieval rabbit farming; and confirmed the assumption that St Leonard's was a much more open, heathy landscape 500 years ago. The numerous minepits would have supplied iron ore to nearby furnaces, and many of the pits are very well preserved. There are remains of pillow mounds throughout St Leonard's Forest – the surviving remnants of what was historically known as the Great Warren. Extensive boundary banks found in the survey may represent the management divisions of these warrens.

### Key Outputs

- 4.0ha of "heathy wood" habitat enhancements.
- 28.0ha of invasive species control – rhododendron and bracken.
- 2.0km of site access tracks improved.
- 1 car park improved.
- 1 Archaeological Survey undertaken.

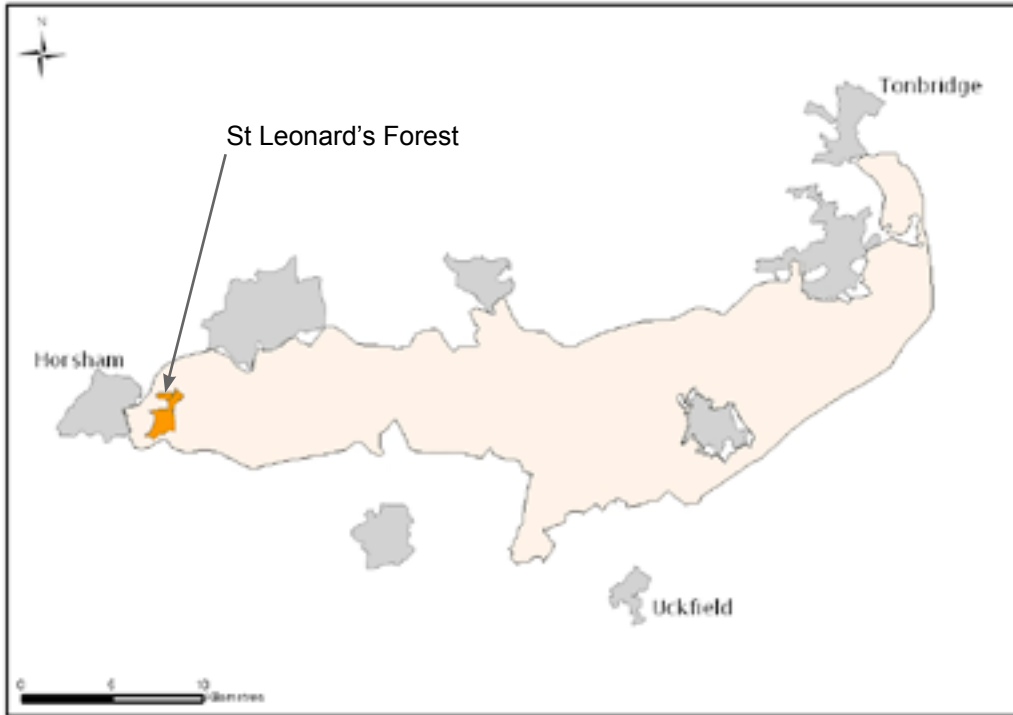
*"I like the heathy clearings; I've noticed more buzzards and more species diversity."*

*"The new surface on the main path makes it much better in bad weather and for walking with the elderly."*

*"It's less muddy now and I've seen a lot more wildlife."*

*"The information boards are great and the paths more accessible."*

Site visitors in 2012  
Visitor Survey



© Forestry Commission



© Forestry Commission

## What Does the Future Hold?

The Forestry Commission will manage and maintain the physical site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments.

The Archaeological Survey undertaken included important sustainability and legacy elements. In conjunction with the East Sussex County Archaeologist, the survey results have been developed into a “constraints map”. Using a simple green, amber, red “traffic light” system, areas of archaeological features have been

*“The archaeological survey has been invaluable in informing future management and, through interpretation, the fascinating history of the Forest has been brought to life and made accessible to site users.”*

Forestry Commission

mapped; placing constraints on FC site operations appropriate to the importance of the features in a national / regional / local perspective. This constraints mapping is being incorporated into the site management plan.



## Partnerships

- ✓ East Sussex County Council (Historic Environment)
- ✓ Friends of St Leonard's
- ✓ Horsham District Council
- ✓ The Company
- ✓ West Sussex County Council
- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project

*Match funding* : Forestry Commission, including 10 year management and maintenance costs.

## Contact

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Enhancing Publicly Accessible Sites		PA 21
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Value</b>	
Forest Footsteps Across the Ridge: Tilgate Forest (excl. interpretation)	£ 42,427	
<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<b>Project Aim</b>	
	To create and link heathy woodland and conservation margins, and to improve and upgrade pedestrian access within Tilgate Forest.	



© Forestry Commission



© Forestry Commission

### What Was Delivered?

The majority of the 150ha Tilgate Forest is classified as a Plantation on Ancient Woodland (PAWS) site. However, as the remnant of one of the four medieval hunting forests of the Weald Forest Ridge, Tilgate would, at times in its varied past, have been a much more open, woody heath landscape. To enhance the site's remnant heathland assemblages, scrub clearance – with follow-up bracken spraying – was undertaken along rides and in two focused areas. Invasive *Rhododendron ponticum* was also cleared from extensive areas of the site, especially north of the M23.

Several main tracks and paths were narrow, overgrown and degraded at Tilgate Forest before the commencement of the WFR LPS. This resulted in significant re-grading and re-profiling on trails throughout the southern half of the site.

Two surveys were also undertaken: ecological and archaeological.

The Ecological Survey was conducted in-house by the FC Regional Ecologist and Wildlife Ranger. After desk-based analysis, site works focused on vegetation (trees, shrubs and ground flora), invasive plants, veteran trees, butterflies, reptiles, small mammals, dormice, bats and birds.

The Archaeological Survey was re-programmed to make use of the Scheme's delayed LiDAR survey (see PA27, Understanding and Conserving the Historic Environment). The East Sussex County Council County Archaeologist assisted with production of the tender brief; working on behalf of

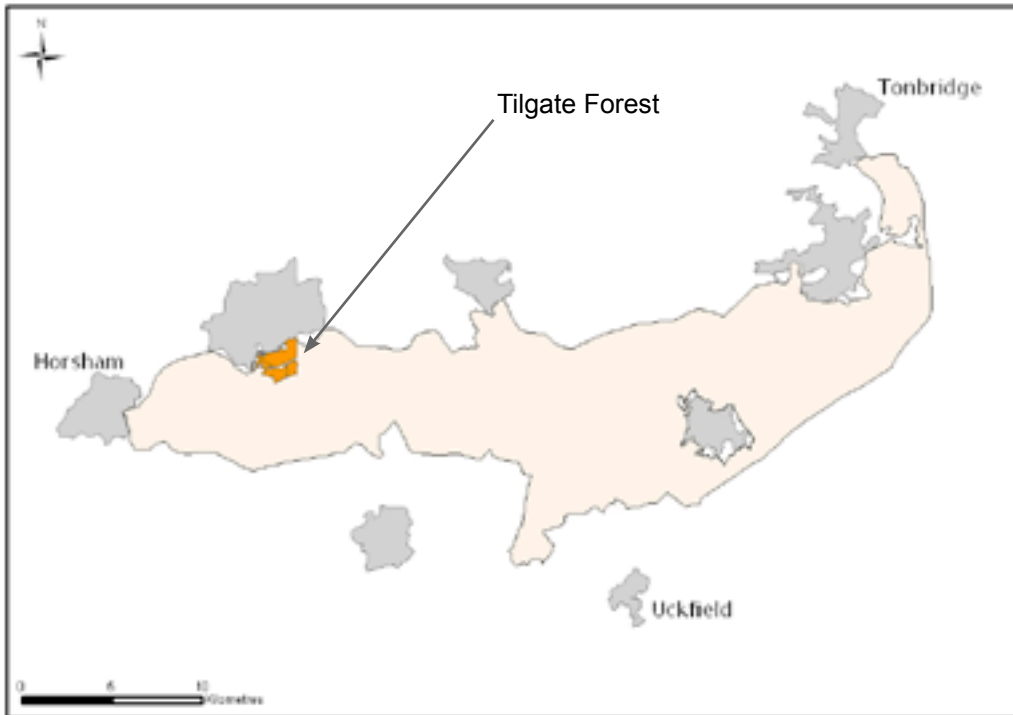
his West Sussex colleagues and ensuring a consistency of approach with FC across the two counties. Whilst just over 100 archaeological features were recorded; the vast majority were 18th century and later – with relatively few from its medieval past as a hunting forest, working woodland or rabbit warren. This represents significant, more recent, site changes; including a 20th century experimental tree nursery and a current, adventure mountain bike area – which was recorded to avoid puzzling future archaeologists as to its form and function!

### Key Outputs

- 4.0km of access tracks and paths improved.
- 3.0ha of "heathy wood" and ride-side habitat enhancements.
- 13.0ha of rhododendron clearance.
- 1 Archaeological Survey undertaken.
- 1 Ecological Survey undertaken.

*"Through this project, Tilgate Forest has become a much more welcoming place to visitors, and important environmental components have been enhanced."*

Forestry Commission



© Forestry Commission



© Forestry Commission



© Forestry Commission



## What Does the Future Hold?

The Forestry Commission will manage and maintain the physical site enhancements for at least the next ten years, as part of its Delivery Partner commitments.

*"The partnership approach of the WFR LP Scheme has enabled us to facilitate much greater inter-connectivity between Tilgate Forest and the adjoining honeypot site of Tilgate Park. This should significantly increase visitor numbers to Tilgate Forest. Also, we now have a permanent Forest School teaching site we can use in Tilgate Forest, as an outcome from the Scheme."*

Manager, Gatwick Greenspace Partnership

Both of the surveys undertaken included important sustainability and legacy elements. The Ecological Survey set generic conservation management principles for future site management, as well as a five-year programme of more detailed management activities. These are linked to the site's overarching Forest Design Plan.

In conjunction with the East Sussex County Archaeologist, the Archaeological Survey results have been developed into a "constraints map". Using a simple green, amber, red "traffic light" system, areas of archaeological features have been mapped; placing constraints on FC site operations appropriate to the importance of the features in a national / regional / local perspective. This constraints mapping is being incorporated into the site management plan.

### Partnerships

- ✓ East Sussex County Council (Historic Environment)
- ✓ Sussex Wildlife Trust
- ✓ Gatwick Greenspace Partnership
- ✓ West Sussex County Council
- ✓ Sussex Biological Records Centre
- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project

*Match funding*: Forestry Commission, including 10 year management and maintenance costs.

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