

Section	Section Title
5.	Public Celebration and Learning

<i>Project</i>	<i>PA No.</i>
Living History Activities	PA 26
Archaeological Awareness Activities	PA 25
Open Your Eyes to the Weald Forest Ridge (in-part)	PA 61
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Forestry Commission Site Interpretation	PA's 01,15, 20, 21
Developing the Community at Hargate Forest (in-part)	PA 59
Family Fun – Parent and Toddler	PA 51
Giant Maidens	n/a
Spring Forward	n/a

Public Celebration and Learning		PA 26
Project Name	Value	
Living History Activities	£ 32,707	
Delivery Partner	Project Aim	
	To engage local residents and visitors with the Weald Forest Ridge's rich cultural landscape heritage through high quality, location-based theatrical trails.	



What Was Delivered?

Five totally individual plays were delivered in a 15 month period in 2010/12. At the simpler end of the spectrum, there were two, two-actor plays that promenaded around Broadwater Warren and St Leonard's Forest. In "Warren Broadwater: Man of Mystery" and "Where be Dragons", the fascinating cultural heritage of these sites was explored through entertaining plays targeted at family audiences.

With "Warren Broadwater: ...", an RSPB volunteer leader was a central performer in the play: to link the guided walk into the play and to deliver the factual element of the trail about the major heathland restoration works being undertaken on this archaeologically-rich site by the RSPB. A third play - "Ostrich Feathers" - explored the story of the Victorian former-owner of what is now a West Sussex CC Country Park. Here, the Park's Chief Ranger also linked the guided walk element to the play.

Two larger-scale plays provided dramatic theatrical productions. "Up in Smoke" (the play on a moving steam train!) explored the changing social and cultural history of Tunbridge Wells in 1918; against a backdrop of the end of the First World War, the Suffragette movement, and the tourist attraction of the High Rocks sandrock outcrops. "The Jigsaw Puzzle" saw professional actors perform alongside a cast of 30 amateurs from the Stoneland Players in the centre of West Hoathly. The Players, established in 1910, have a history inextricably linked to the village and its former lord of the manor.

Most promotion and publicity for the 5 trails was undertaken by the WFR Team in conjunction with The Company: reducing project costs, ensuring consistent Scheme messages and enabling knowledge transfer between the quite disparate arts and environment sectors.

A much smaller Living History Activities project was originally planned at Stage 2; to be delivered by a lead volunteer with additional volunteer input. However, the lead volunteer moved away from the area in 2009, as the Scheme commenced delivery, and an alternative delivery mechanism, utilising the skills and expertise of The Company, was set up.

Key Outputs

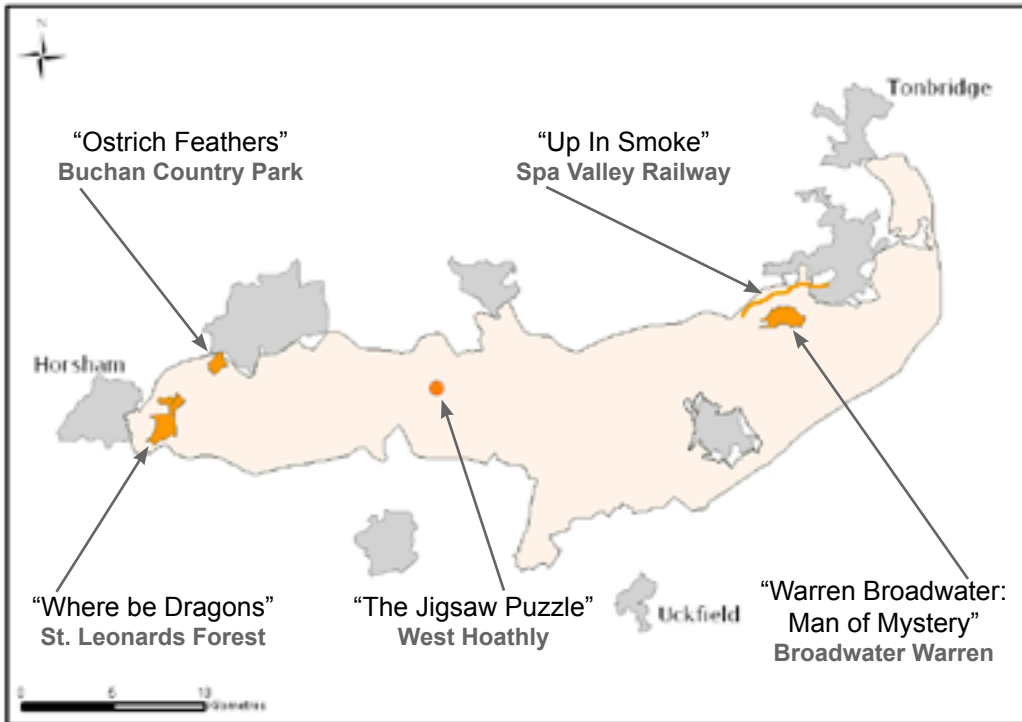
- 5 theatrical trails scripted and produced.
- 25 performances of the 5 trails staged.
- 1,207 adults and children attended the trails.
- 39 volunteers acted in, or assisted in productions.

"I enjoyed the event more than I ever anticipated - appreciating the experience, the family friendly show and learning a little of the history."

Audience Member at "Warren Broadwater: ..."

"If someone had just given me a piece of information about the original owners of Buchan Park, I would have never have engaged with the characters as much as I did when they were brought to life in the Ostrich feathers production."

Audience Member at "Ostrich Feathers"



What Does the Future Hold?

The RSPB, Spa Valley Railway, Forestry Commission and Buchan Country Park have all expressed interest in staging their respective productions again as part of their events' programmes.

After seeing the WFR performances, various other Scheme stakeholders and local attractions (such as Borde Hill Gardens) have made enquiries about new play commissions or, in the case of Horsham District Council, adapting "Where be Dragons" for their Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods site.

"To experience a play about a place, in the place where we live brings where we live to life."

Audience Member at "The Jigsaw Puzzle"



As a young theatre company in the Weald of Sussex and Kent, The Company has benefited hugely from its role in the WFR LPS: with new contacts, greater business confidence, and an enhanced ability to undertake ever more challenging commissions. In 2012, for instance, The Company was commissioned by East Sussex CC to deliver a 45-character, community show at the De La Warr Pavillion, Bexhill.

"It has led to us cementing existing relationships and creating some wonderful new relationships with very diverse organisations. We've achieved far more than we anticipated."

The Company

An additional objective achieved by "The Jigsaw Puzzle" production was to enhance and rejuvenate The Stoneland Players; by bringing in new members and enabling learning from the collaboration with a professional theatre company.



Partnerships

- ✓ Forestry Commission (St Leonard's Forest)
- ✓ RSPB (Broadwater Warren nature reserve)
- ✓ Spa Valley Railway
- ✓ Sussex Past
- ✓ The Stoneland Players
- ✓ Tunbridge Wells Museum & Art Gallery
- ✓ West Sussex County Council (Buchan Country Park)

Match funding: 8 organisations provided match funding, alongside subsidised ticket sales plus volunteers.

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Public Celebration and Learning		PA 25
Project Name	Value	
Archaeological Awareness Activities	£ 28,291	
Delivery Partner	Project Aim	
	<p>To deliver a wide range of heritage activities and events across the Weald Forest Ridge to fire people's imaginations and to inspire them to investigate and engage with their rich local cultural heritage.</p>	



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What Was Delivered?

From summer 2009 through to early 2012, ESAMP staff and volunteers staged 18 one-day or longer public activity sessions. Whilst varying in scale and location, each session involved practical, hands-on archaeological activities and demonstrations for both children and adults: to enable a much greater appreciation and understanding of the archaeological heritage of the Weald Forest Ridge. The sessions were hugely appreciated by attendees.

The actual hands-on activities staged at each event were chosen to reflect local archaeology and the requirements of the particular site. Preparatory research was normally carried out using the County Historic Environment Record – to identify particular local features – and often LiDAR mapping (see PA27, Understanding and Conserving the Historic Environment section) was interrogated to locate visible features that could be interpreted. At one event, the WFR Scheme Manager attended to additionally lead LiDAR-focused guided walks around extant archaeology.

In several instances, a particular historical period formed the theme of the event: especially the Mesolithic Period, which provided a rich vein of activities around fire-lighting; deer hunting using hazel and flint for bows and arrows; and wild foods (nettle crisps were a particular speciality!).

As the partnership working ethic of the Scheme developed during the delivery period, ESAMP became an invaluable Delivery Partner: providing an archaeological heritage angle at several project launch and celebratory events. For example, they staged engrossing hands-on activities at the Woodland Trust's Hargate Forest celebration (PA59), as well as the Parent and Toddler Walks' launch events run by KHWP (PA51).

A key element of the project was the creation of a reconstruction Mesolithic Shelter at the Ashdown Forest Centre. Not only were the public engaged in its construction, but they also gained a teaching and interpretive resource; which has enabled ESAMP to develop a more permanent base at the Centre for a wide range of activities.

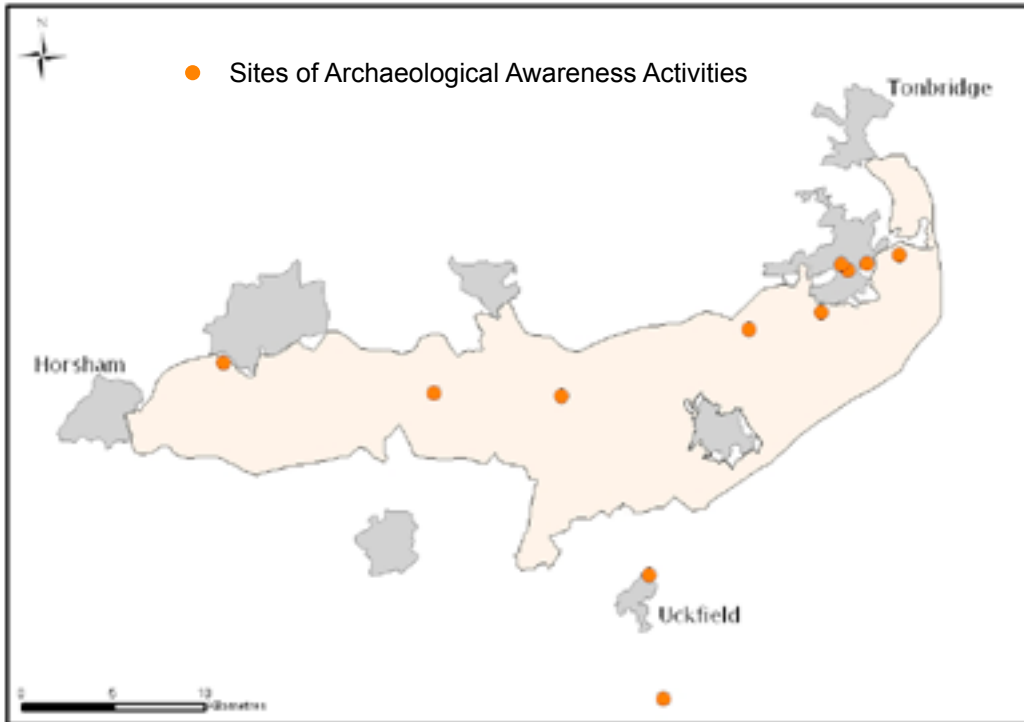
Often in the project, interpretive stories were created within stories. The hazel used to build the Ashdown Forest Centre Mesolithic Shelter was provided in-kind by the Conservators of Ashdown Forest from their own coppice woodland on the Forest: showcasing historical land uses and modern-day sustainability.

Key Outputs

- 17 one-day activity events staged.
- Additional "drop-in" event staged over 2 week period at Buchan Country Park.
- Over 1,900 children and almost 2,500 adults attended events.
- A Mesolithic reconstruction shelter built at Ashdown Forest Centre.
- 18 volunteers contributed over £10,000 of volunteer time.

"We truly enjoyed the archaeology - the individuals were incredibly welcoming and child friendly."

Family at Hargate Forest Celebration Day



What Does the Future Hold?

Undoubtedly, ESAMP developed a particularly engaging and informative style of hands-on archaeological activity whilst delivering this project, which increased heritage awareness amongst WFR target audiences.

Numerous strengthened or new partnerships were formed with a wide range of organisations within the WFR and surrounding area; in particular Sussex Past and the Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery. These organisations are keen to continue these new working relationships, and ESAMP will continue to work with as many organisations as possible. Funding will inevitably be a consideration in staging future awareness activities, and will be overcome by using existing resources, such as other grant schemes, and levying modest “gate fees” on attendees.

“There’s a really good fit between our work and the WFR LPS – helping communities access landscapes.”
ESAMP



© ESAMP

“It’s given us the opportunity to work with new organisations in a really positive way and make lots of new connections. We know that opportunities are much more likely in the future.”
ESAMP

The Ashdown Forest Centre – with a focus on the Mesolithic Shelter – will continue to act as an ESAMP “base camp” for events and activities. The Conservators of Ashdown Forest are particularly supportive of this partner relationship, as it provides an added visitor draw to the Centre and delivers activities within their events programme. It was the success of this Ashdown resource that led West Sussex County Council, in early 2012, to develop their own Mesolithic resource with ESAMP at Buchan Country Park (see PA44).



Partnerships

- ✓ Bentley Wildfowl & Motor Museum
- ✓ Conservators of Ashdown Forest
- ✓ Forestry Commission
- ✓ Kent High Weald Partnership
- ✓ Pepenbury
- ✓ Sussex Past
- ✓ Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery
- ✓ West Sussex County Council
- ✓ Woodland Trust

Match funding: ESAMP, volunteers and in-kind support.

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Public Celebration and Learning		PA 61
Project Name	Value	
Open Your Eyes to the Weald Forest Ridge (in-part)	£ 30,020	
Delivery Partner	Project Aim	
	<p>To raise awareness and increase knowledge of the Weald Forest Ridge's unique heritage to target audiences, through the arts and the written word.</p>	



© Heron Recreations



What Was Delivered?

The non-schools element of the Open Your Eyes project produced four key outputs.

An illustrator produced 11 full-colour heritage illustrations. Spanning from the Mesolithic period to the modern, each illustration was drawn from the same viewpoint and depicted the human influence on the historical development of the Weald Forest Ridge.

These graphics were used as the cover illustrations for the "Historical Happenings in the High Weald" publication. Written for a six to 13 age range, this 28p, A4 booklet covered the same Mesolithic to modern time period in a series of stand-alone articles and activities. Each period contained a "Where in the Weald?" section on places to visit and online resources to access.

Using the original Michelin I-Spy guides as inspiration, a "High Weald Eye Spy" booklet was designed and printed. 97 features that are found across the WFR area were detailed in the Guide, grouped under the area's character component headings: woods and trees; earth and water; fields, heaths and hedges; and buildings, farms and villages, as well as a section on travelling around. Features ranged from easy to spot oak trees, ponds and oast houses – scoring 5 points – to very hard to find slit trenches and rippled sandstone – worth 25 points!

Both the Historical Happening and Eye Spy High Weald publications were freely distributed through schools, visitor attractions, Scheme partners and events.

Finally, an updated, web-downloadable version of the highly popular High Weald Landscape Trail guide was produced. The original, 1990's book version of this guide to the long-distance walking trail that crosses the WFR area from west to east, on its way to a finish in Rye, was out of print. The e-version production enabled low-cost "reprinting" and increased access in the electronic age, as well as the chance to update content.

"The children absolutely loved the Eye Spy guides – they packed them alongside their packed lunches for our school trip to a local wood!"

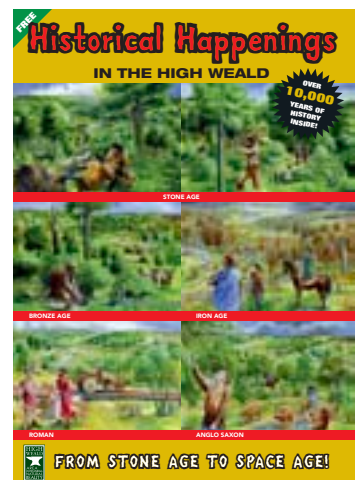
Teacher at local primary school

Key Outputs

- 1 "Eye Spy High Weald" booklet published, with 20,000 print run.
- 1 "Historical Happenings in the High Weald" booklet published, with 40,000 print run.
- High Weald Landscape Trail guide updated as an e-publication.
- 11 heritage illustrations produced.

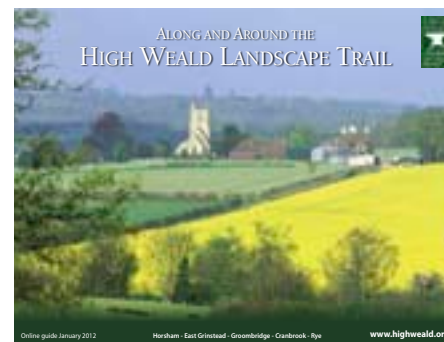
"The new (Historical Happenings) booklet is brilliant! I will put copies in each of our history topic boxes."

Teacher at local primary school





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Online guide January 2012 Horham - East Grinstead - Groombridge - Cranbrook - Rye www.highweald.org



What Does the Future Hold?

Despite the Open Your Eyes project having produced a suite of physical resources – which are ends in their own right – exciting legacy opportunities still exist.

The heritage illustrations will be used by the High Weald AONB Unit (HWU – the delivery arm of the High Weald JAC) and other partners for appropriate interpretive materials. In particular, the HWU plans to create interactive webpages exploring the landscape’s historical development, using the chronologically progressive illustrations as the core elements.

The Historical Happenings publication will continue to be distributed to target audiences and visitor venues, and a re-print will be considered, if there is sufficient demand.

The relationship between “Eye Spy” and the publishers of the commercial “I-Spy” guides – Michelin – has proved fruitful. In 2010, Michelin gave production approval for the “Eye Spy” publication, given the non-commercial situation. Further dialogue in late 2011 has led to Michelin producing a commercial I-Spy High Weald guide, as one of a series of regional protected landscapes. This guide is available through the normal commercial outlets and the HWU is promoting it to over 200 visitor destinations and accommodation providers, as a way of educating their audiences about the High Weald.

“The Eye Spy looks fantastic and is a brilliant production. I reckon the most difficult to ‘spy’ will be the nightjar and the rippled sandstone.”

WFR Volunteer (in second childhood!)



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Partnerships

- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project
- ✓ East Sussex County Council

Match funding: Defra, High Weald Joint Advisory Committee.

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Public Celebration and Learning	PA 01
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Project Name	Value
Discovering the Magic of Ashdown Forest	£ 110,633

Delivery Partner	Project Aim
	<p>To use interpretation to capture the magic of Ashdown Forest, one of the four “Maidens” of the Weald Forest Ridge, and to foster understanding and responsibility of this special landscape.</p>



What Was Delivered?

Ashdown Forest is a place of superlatives: the largest public access space in the South East; the best preserved of the Weald Forest Ridge’s four medieval forests; and a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) under EU Directives. Yet a 2004 visitor survey showed that understanding of the Forest’s unique environment was low, and needed constant reinforcement. Consequently, a suite of interpretive outputs were delivered between 2009 and early 2012: targeted at both new and existing audiences, and with a focus at the Ashdown Forest Centre – the visitor centre for the Forest.

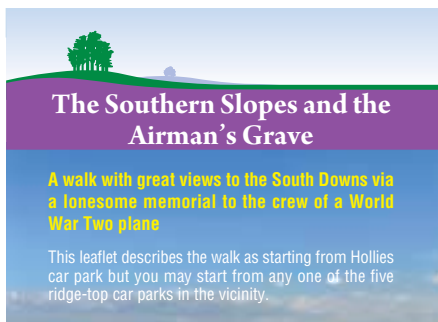
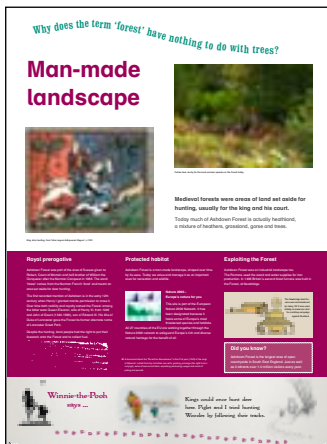
The largest output was a new exhibition at the Centre’s Information Barn; exploring such aspects as the Forest’s history, management, hunting forest development, and cultural associations. This inspiring exhibition – full of fascinating facts for a wide range of audiences – was delivered considerably under-budget; which allowed additional outputs to be built into the project. One such output was a Forest timeline, wrapped around the outside of the Information Barn to entice visitors inside to discover more.

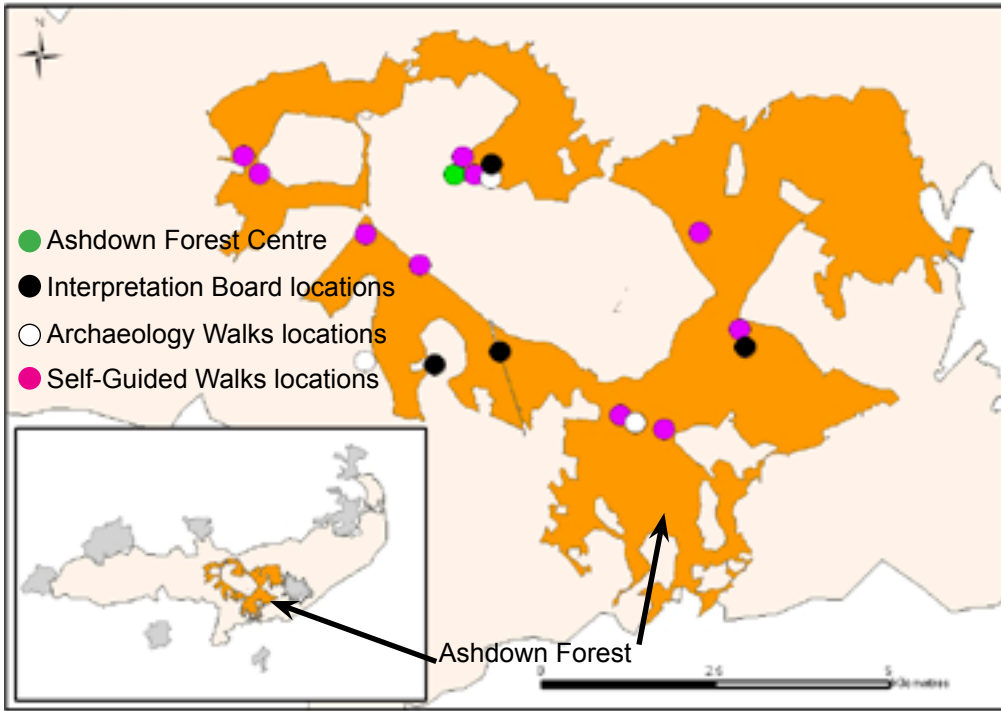
Self-guided walks leaflets were a key mechanism used to inform visitors, as well as subtly steer them to less sensitive areas of the Forest. Ten general leaflets were produced and a further three self-guided walks were also printed – in conjunction with the Forest’s archaeologist – to explore much of the Forest’s fascinating landscape heritage: from Bronze Age barrows, through royal deer hunting and rabbit farming, to 250 years of military activity. All leaflets printed were also made available as downloadable website pdf’s.

The archaeology theme was continued into a stunning film, which explored the historical development of the Forest and the rich evidence still visible today. The film was incorporated into the Forest Centre exhibition and uploaded to the Conservators’ website.

Key Outputs

- 1 new Ashdown Forest exhibition installed in Information Barn at the Forest Centre.
- 1 8-minute film on the archaeology of Ashdown Forest produced.
- 1 Forest Timeline installed outside Information Barn at the Forest Centre.
- 10 self-guided walks leaflets for specific locations produced.
- 3 self-guided history and archaeology walks leaflets for specific locations produced.
- 1 general Ashdown Forest history and archaeology leaflet produced.
- 4 interpretation boards installed at key locations on Forest.
- Smartphone remote interpretation produced.
- 1 new website interface designed.
- 120plus years of Conservators’ historical meeting minutes transcribed to web.
- Major visitor event staged, with 350 attendees.





This website was also enhanced in two specific areas:

- It was redesigned, and its content made much more accessible, through a new web interface that placed all information about the Forest within three clicks of the homepage.
- Additionally, a fascinating historic archive was made available to the public for the first time ever. The minutes of every Conservators' meeting, right back to their establishment in 1885, were transcribed from dusty minute books into online, searchable documents.

Remote accessibility to web-based information was an additional area of work.

"It's opened my eyes and I never knew there was so much around me."
 Visitor to Ashdown Forest

"QR" codes were placed on the byelaws signage in each of the Forest's 50 car parks; allowing direct access to the Conservators' website and self-guided walks information using the GPS facility of smartphones across all platforms. The self-guided walks were also made available through an i-phone app.



More traditional interpretation boards were designed and installed at three major Forest car parks – Broadstone, King's Standing and Millstone East – with a fourth board installed in the forest garden at Chelwood Vachery.



Finally, a one-day visitor event was staged at the Forest Centre, with significant input from the WFR Scheme Management Team and High Weald AONB Unit.

Using a strong arts theme, "AshFest!" celebrated the varied landscapes and heritage of the Forest, and took inspiration from the Conservators' conservation grazing herd of Hebridean Sheep. Links were made to many other areas and projects within the Scheme, especially the school's work within the Forest's Education Resources project (PA36, see Learning in Schools).

"We had a really lovely time!"
 Family attending AshFest!



AshFest

The Ashdown Forest Festival

A FREE celebration for families of all things Ashdown:

- Make a 'horned' sheep's headdress and create a memento from brightly coloured fleece.
- Enter your home made 'shepherd's crook' in the children's competition to win a fabulous prize!
- Watch woodland craft demonstrations
- Make your own charcoal sticks and join our fun drawing workshop
- Explore ancient fire making, wild food, hazel weaving and archery as you learn how we have lived off the Forest, past and present
- The grand finale: join our colourful, musical procession across the Forest!
- Visit www.highweald.org/ashfest for crook-making tips and further details.

AshFest is a partnership project delivered by the Conservators of Ashdown Forest, High Weald AONB Unit and Same Sky, as part of the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund

What Does the Future Hold?

The Conservators of Ashdown Forest will manage and maintain the Forest Centre exhibition, timeline, film and interpretation boards for at least the next ten years, as part of their Delivery Partner commitments. Similarly, the self-guided walks leaflets will be reprinted as demand dictates.

The Conservators' WFR involvement has enabled them to fully realise the benefits that accrue from co-ordinated, well-branded, correctly messaged interpretive materials. Subsequently, they have already identified two further interpretive items they wish to produce: a film exploring seasonal Forest management and a general introductory leaflet. They will seek funding for these in due course.

"We hope visitors will find the self-guided walks routes easy to follow and discover some of the magic of the Forest and its fascinating history and wildlife."

Conservators of Ashdown Forest

Whilst staged as a fully-funded, one-off WFR LPS event, AshFest was designed to be adaptable and with income generation potentials for future, more financially sustainable, events. The WFR Scheme Manager produced a detailed AshFest report and evaluation for the Conservators, so that the learning process from staging the event is available for the future. Unfortunately, the Conservators are presently indicating that, with the current economic constraints, they are unlikely

to stage events of a similar size and scale: instead relying on more low-risk, volunteer-led events to attract new audiences to the Forest Centre. However, the AshFest template still exists, if circumstances change.




Partnerships

- ✓ Broadwater Warren Scout Site and Activity Centre
- ✓ BTCV
- ✓ East Sussex County Council
- ✓ ESAMP
- ✓ Esus Forestry and Training
- ✓ Gatwick Greenspace Partnership
- ✓ High Weald AONB Unit
- ✓ Horsham Green Gym
- ✓ Same Sky
- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project

Match funding: Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust, Conservators of Ashdown Forest, Friends of Ashdown Forest, Rotherwick Foundation, Wealden District Council, plus volunteers.

Contact

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Public Celebration and Learning		PA 63
Project Name	Value	
The Weald Wood Kits Project	£ 21,677	
Delivery Partner	Project Aim	
	To bridge the gap between peoples' desire to purchase distinctive local products that support woodland conservation in the Weald Forest Ridge and the very real and practical difficulties in sourcing these at an affordable price.	



What Was Delivered?

Two designers were appointed at the start of the project: one to mainly work with site-milled, lower-grade corsican pine; the other to work with small-size sweet chestnut and oak to a higher specification finish. Seven prototype products were developed: large and small log stores, a V-frame shelter, a garden tidy, a domestic smoker, a chicken coop and a "chuck bin" for log storage.

A consultation exercise was carried out on these prototypes at the regional Weald Wood Fair in September 2011. 98 responses were received – giving wide-ranging feedback on issues such as construction, visual aspects and price. The prototypes were subsequently housed with potential end users for further feedback – such as the wood smoker going to a wild-game caterer. An additional prototype – a towable, trailer-built, double composting toilet – was also placed with a "glamping" facility, to test its useability for "off-grid" sites where portaloos would be inappropriate.



What Does the Future Hold?

There has been considerable interest in the various wood kits. The High Weald AONB Unit and the Forestry Commission will continue to drive the initiative forward and investigate new products. Product specifications will be completed for commercially viable products and potential manufacturers sought. Feedback and promotion will be undertaken by way of websites and/or blogs.

Key Outputs

- 8 prototype products designed, constructed and placed for trial.
- 1 public consultation event staged at regional wood fair, with 100 responses.

"Use of lower grade, local wood is an excellent concept."

"I'm very positive about these products if they support local woodlands."

"The wood store is elegant and unobtrusive; brilliant for a small garden or small fireplace and easy to keep tidy."

"The smoker has good commercial opportunity: I can see wannabe Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstalls going for this!"

Survey respondents at Weald Wood Fair

Partnerships

- ✓ Beech Estate
- ✓ Esus Forestry Training
- ✓ Forestry Commission

Match funding. Defra, Forestry Commission.



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Public Celebration and Learning		PA 32
Project Name		Value
Family Safaris		£ 475
Delivery Partner		Project Aim
 		To raise awareness of the heritage resources of the Weald Forest Ridge for learning and enjoyment, and to encourage local people to access and learn about their local landscape.



What Was Delivered?

Between three and five walks were delivered, on a range of countryside / nature reserve sites around the edges of Tunbridge Wells, in each of the 2009, 2010 and 2011 summers. The walks were led by Dr. Ian Beavis: a highly respected member of staff at the Museum, with an encyclopaedic knowledge of local flora and fauna and a specialism in entomology.

The walks were broadly nature-themed, with a particular focus on collecting and identifying insect species. This specialisation was a key attraction, and Ian Beavis developed something of a cult following! However, all walks responded to what wildlife was found on the sites at particular times of the summer. Many also investigated landscape history and development, so that such aspects as charcoal production and the Wealden iron industry were similarly explored.

Each summer of walks was preceded by extensive promotion through widely distributed flyers produced by the Museum; articles in local lifestyle publications; and information on the Museum's webpages. Evaluative feedback showed that this broad publicity was necessary to attract the full range of attendees.

Pre-booking was used to manage attendee numbers, so that a maximum group size of 30 was used for any one walk. After delivery of the first three walks in 2009, a rebranding exercise was undertaken to clarify that they targeted adults and children over 8, rather than being purely family-focussed events.

The five sites used for the walks included two enhancement sites within the WFR LPS: Broadwater Warren, managed by the RSPB; and Hargate Forest, managed by the Woodland Trust. The three other sites were within the Pembury Walks complex of woods and heath at Tudeley – also managed by the RSPB. This partnership working engendered through the LP Scheme provided a perfect legacy.

"Ian Beavis is a gem! Thank you for such an interesting morning."

Attendee at Broadwater Warren walk (Aug. 2011)

Key Outputs

- 3 "High Weald Walks" annual flyers widely distributed.
- 12 guided walks around 5 local wildlife sites.
- 176 adults and 26 children attended the walks.

"I most enjoyed the description of charcoal burning and how the High Weald was the industrial centre of England."

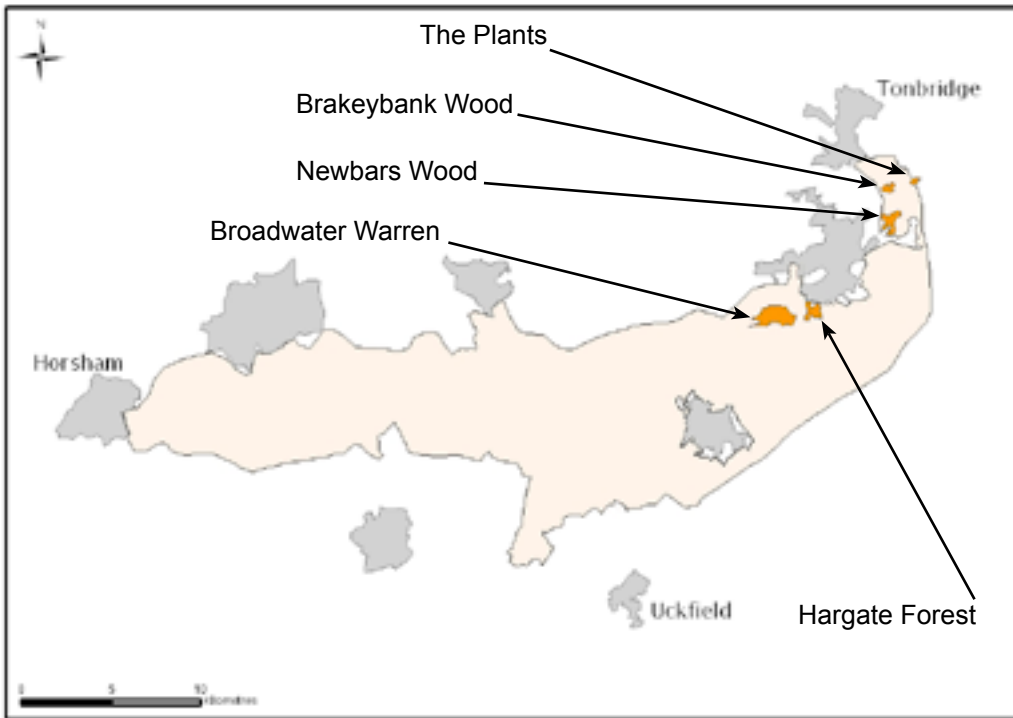
Attendee at Brakeybank Wood walk (Sept. 2011)

"... this walk introduced me to a beautiful area of woodland on "my doorstep" that I had never been to in 50 years!"

Attendee at The Plants walk (July 2011)

"Group activities of this nature are excellent, especially for elderly widows like myself who might hesitate to explore such places on their own."

Attendee at Newbars Wood walk (Aug. 2010)



What Does the Future Hold?

Because of the partnership working with the RSPB, the Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery so benefited from delivering the Family Safaris project that it has already chosen to continue to stage "High Weald Walks" in the future, in conjunction

"My first visit to this RSPB reserve, but it will not be my last!"

Attendee at Newbars Wood walk (Aug. 2010)

"The 'event' of course is Ian Beavis. No Ian - no event!"

Attendee at Broadwater Warren walk (Aug 2011)

"It's a great pleasure to be taken through the local woodland by such experts."

Attendee at Newbars Wood walk (June 2011)

"I will return to this site with a much greater knowledge and enthusiasm."

Attendee at Brakeybank Wood walk (June 2010)

with the RSPB. Four walks have been promoted and delivered in 2012: badged as "guided walks around local RSPB reserves with natural history expert Ian Beavis". The intention is to continue to deliver these as free walks in subsequent years; with the minimal promotional costs absorbed by the Museum.

"Being 'townies', we found all aspect of the event interesting."

Attendee at Brakeybank Wood walk (June 2010)

"I shall revisit the Pembury Walks area on my own, particularly in late May to see if I can hear a nightjar."

Attendee at Newbars Wood walk (Aug 2010)

Additionally, Ian Beavis has undertaken to deliver at least one nature walk each year at the Woodland Trust's Hargate Forest - to be promoted within the site's extensive events programme.



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Partnerships

✓ RSPB

✓ Woodland Trust

Match funding: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Public Celebration and Learning		PA's 05, 15, 20 & 21 (in-part)
Project Name		Value
Forestry Commission Site Interpretation		£ 26,599
Delivery Partner	Project Aim	
	<p>No specific aim. <i>(Interpretation objectives were incorporated within the WFR project proposals at four Forestry Commission sites.)</i></p>	



What Was Delivered?

Whilst not a project in its own right, initially separate interpretation proposals at three Forestry Commission enhancement sites in the WFR LPS were developed into a co-ordinated interpretive strategy applied across all four FC sites within the Scheme: Birchden Wood (PA15) and Sheffield, St Leonard's and Tilgate Forests (PA's 05, 20 and 21 respectively). Initial proposals were for site leaflets, but distribution and accessibility considerations led to these being replaced with interpretation boards and other interpretive mechanisms.

With considerable input from the WFR Scheme Management Team, a design brief for interpretation was produced – co-ordinated across three of the sites. (Sheffield Forest was added subsequently, responding to site needs and utilising budgetary underspend). The appointed designer had undertaken considerable previous Forestry Commission work, and brought a wealth of both experience and exciting design to the contract.

The interpretive text was produced jointly by FC site management staff and the WFR Team, and both organisations worked together to refine designs and sign off the boards for production. Beyond information boards at site entrances, interpretive themes tended to focus on site history and archaeology, as well as wildlife and site management. Information from site archaeology and wildlife surveys, alongside wider Scheme elements such as the LiDAR survey (see PA27, Understanding and Conserving the Historic Environment), were incorporated into the interpretation boards: highlighting the benefits accruing from the Scheme's partnership working ethic.

A key theme of the interpretive work was also to use wood as an interpretation medium: subliminally enforcing core FC communication messages. Consequently, beyond FC house-style timber interpretation housings, chainsaw sculptures were commissioned for three of the sites:

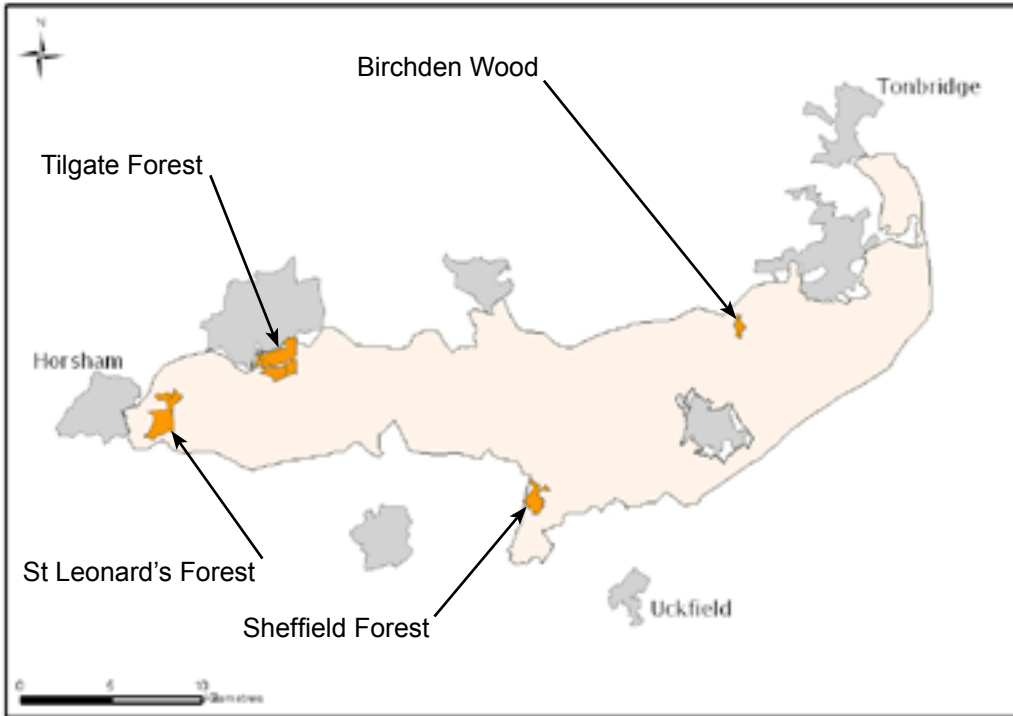
- At Tilgate Forest, two gateway sculptures depicted day-time and night-time wildlife likely to be found on site.
- An oak butt was transformed into a stunning viewpoint seat at St Leonard's Forest, depicting the mythical St Leonard's dragon.
- At Birchden Wood, linked sculptures were produced beside each of the themed boards on the site's All Ability Trail. A giant acorn, a snake, and a cannon with accompanying cannon-balls have proved an instant success with children of all ages, whilst connecting to the accompanying boards.

Key Outputs

- Threshold Forestry Commission sign installed at Birchden Wood
- Welcome interpretation boards installed at all 4 FC sites.
- 3 further interpretation boards installed at Birchden Wood.
- 4 chainsaw carvings, linked to interpretive themes, installed at Birchden Wood.
- 2 further interpretation boards installed at St Leonard's Forest.
- "Dragon" carved seat installed at St Leonard's Forest.
- "Gateway" chainsaw carvings installed at Tilgate Forest.

"I've read all 3 interpretation boards and I think they're wonderful."

Regular dogwalker at St Leonard's Forest



What Does the Future Hold?

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

As an outcome from the WFR LPS, the Forestry Commission is keen to promote greater use of all its High Weald woodlands, as well as increase awareness of their important heritage features.

"The interpretation boards and sculptures have added a new dimension to the woodland experience, by bringing the fascinating history of these sites to life and raising awareness of the valuable environmental features that these woodlands hold."

Forestry Commission

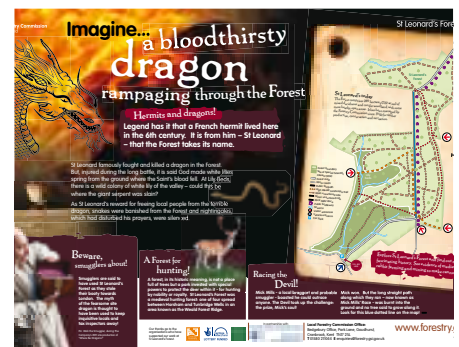
"It's been fascinating walking around Birchden Wood since the interpretation boards have gone up. We've learnt a lot about the history and especially the importance of the woodlands for wildlife."

Father and sons: regular visitors to Birchden Wood

As this report is being written, the WFR Team is working with FC operations and recreation staff to generate pages on the FC website to promote the four sites enhanced through the WFR LPS. It is hoped this will lead to increased visitor numbers to the four sites; building on how FC is seen as a major recreation provider in the south-east through its "honeypot" Bedgebury Pinetum and Forest site.

"The boards are really interesting - I've learnt so much about the site's history and wildlife. And my son thinks the chainsaw sculptures are great."

Mother with young son at Birchden Wood



Partnerships

- ✓ British Mountaineering Council
- ✓ East Sussex County Council
- ✓ Friends of St Leonard's Forest
- ✓ Gatwick Greenspace Partnership
- ✓ High Weald AONB Unit
- ✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project
- ✓ WFR Scheme Management Team

Match funding : Forestry Commission.

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Public Celebration and Learning		PA 59
Project Name	Value	
Developing the Community at Hargate Forest (in-part)	£ 40,835	
Delivery Partner	Project Aim	
	<p>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.</p>	



© Woodland Trust



© Woodland Trust



What Was Delivered?

Initial work focused on consultation with the local Tunbridge Wells community; to both find out what the community wanted on their site and to develop a steering group mechanism. The key requests were enhanced site access and information, alongside long-term conversion of conifer plantations to more open, broadleaved woodland. By mid 2011, a Friends of Hargate Forest group was formally constituted, with a local resident as Chair.

Accompanying the community consultation was an extensive walks and talks events programme: to attract new visitors to Hargate Forest and to help existing visitors learn more about site species, habitats and management by the Woodland Trust. A site archaeological survey further enhanced this learning, and particularly engaged the Friends with the site. Additionally, a suite of holiday bushcraft activities were staged for children and families, and proved especially popular.

Public learning was also enhanced through site interpretation boards installed at the two pedestrian entrances, and the production of a site leaflet.

Running parallel to the WFR-funded project (but not financially supported through the LPS), were various habitat management works; in particular ongoing conifer thinning, and extensive rhododendron removal on the Old Carriageway. This Carriageway clearance enabled hedgerow and specimen tree planting to be undertaken within the LP by the site volunteer group. In an exciting arts initiative, eight bespoke tree guards were commissioned from a local blacksmith; to protect the specimen trees. They interpreted either site flora and fauna or local heritage stories – such as pannage – and were designed by children from a local special needs school and the WFR Scheme Management Team.

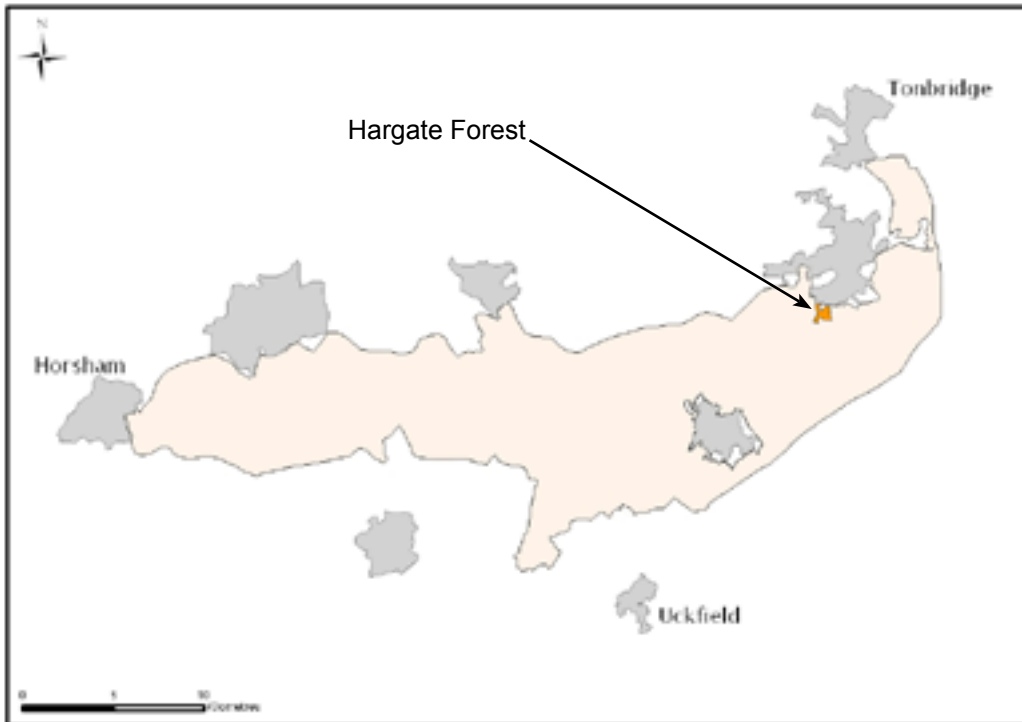
The Woodland Trust only joined the WFR Partnership in late 2009, and hence the Hargate Forest project was delivered, much to the Trust's credit, in a condensed two year period. It was concluded with a highly successful Celebration Event – staged in December 2011 – where families enjoyed a wide range of woodcraft, bushcraft, nature detectives' and archaeological activities, as well as horse-logging demonstrations.

Key Outputs

- Friends of Hargate Forest established.
- 10 bushcraft events staged, with 137 children and 62 adult attendees.
- 16 guided walks and other public events staged, with 287 children and 204 adult attendees.
- 11 Friends' meetings held, plus 4 further consultation walks, with 56 attendees.
- 1 Celebration Event, with 208 attendees.
- 2 welcome interpretation boards installed.
- 1 site leaflet printed.
- 1 archaeology report produced.
- "Before" and "after" visitor surveys undertaken, with 255 responses.

"I think the starting of the Friends of Hargate Forest, ... and the work carried out in the Forest have been really appreciated by the community."

Local resident



© Woodland Trust



What Does the Future Hold?

Obviously, the Woodland Trust will continue to manage and maintain the Forest in the long-term, but the enhanced community engagement with the site – enabled through the WFR LPS – has raised the site’s profile considerably.

The establishment of the Friends group has been key to project legacy and sustainability. The Friends are already starting to produce their own newsletters, in conjunction with the Woodland Trust. The Trust will continue to support the Friends, but it is planned over time that the Friends will run their own events, and even fundraise for the site.

“We went from no events at all, to getting lots of people visiting Hargate Forest because of the LPS. We’ve got momentum now to keep going as we have a base of users and interested families.”

Woodland Trust Site Manager



“We’ll be back to Hargate, which before this weekend I didn’t even know existed!”

Family attending Celebration Day, December 2011

The site conservation volunteers group – developed under the BTCV Inspiring People, Improving Places project (PA03, see Training and Skills) – has become loosely affiliated to the Friends, whilst being insured through the Woodland Trust. With a keen leader and a small but committed membership, the volunteers will continue to work in partnership with the Trust; undertaking essential site access and habitat works to a programme drawn up in consultation.



© Woodland Trust

Partnerships

✓ BTCV	✓ RSPB
✓ ESAMP	✓ Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery
✓ Friends of Hargate Forest	✓ WFR Historic Environment Awareness Project
✓ Kent High Weald Partnership	
✓ Oakley School	

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

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Public Celebration and Learning		PA 51
Project Name	Value	
Family Fun – Parent and Toddler	£ 22,165	
Delivery Partner	Project Aim	
	<p>To deliver a series of heritage-related activities aimed at engaging parents and their young children in accessing the Weald Forest Ridge countryside on their doorstep: to build confidence in accessing the countryside and encouraging urban dwellers to participate.</p>	



What Was Delivered?

The WFR LPS's development phase highlighted that there were confidence and knowledge issues with young families (and by default also wheelchair users) being able to find out about, and access, the eastern WFR area on short, promoted walks. This project addressed this particular need.

Initial informal consultation sessions were held with a number of nurseries and parent and toddler groups in and around Tunbridge Wells. From this, a clear demand emerged for a suite of information to be made available to parents with babies and toddlers; from which the parents could make informed choices about whether they would visit a particular site based on its accessibility.

Eight sites were selected to have “toddler friendly” routes promoted on them. Some of these were sites undergoing enhancements within the WFR LPS – Birchden Wood (PA15), Broadwater Warren (PA12), Eridge Rocks (PA18) and Hargate Forest (PA59) – whereas the other four were important access sites in and around Tunbridge Wells – Dunorlan Park, Pepenbury, and Rusthall and Tunbridge Wells Commons. The routes ranged from relatively flat, hard-surfaced paths suitable for buggies; to steeper, unsurfaced routes suitable for adventurous toddlers.

Using graphically simple maps originally developed by the Explore Kent initiative, combined with simple site information, eight individual A5 site cards were developed and printed on robust card. These were packaged together using a lanyard – making them easy to use on individual sites. The packs were launched at three “Toddler Through Time” events – at Dunorlan Park, Birchden Wood and Pepenbury – and widely distributed through other public events and to nurseries, parent and toddler groups, etc. The cards were also made available as web downloads: accompanied by simple activity cards for parents to use whilst on site with their children.

A web-based video, uploaded to Youtube, was also produced to promote each of the buggy walks.

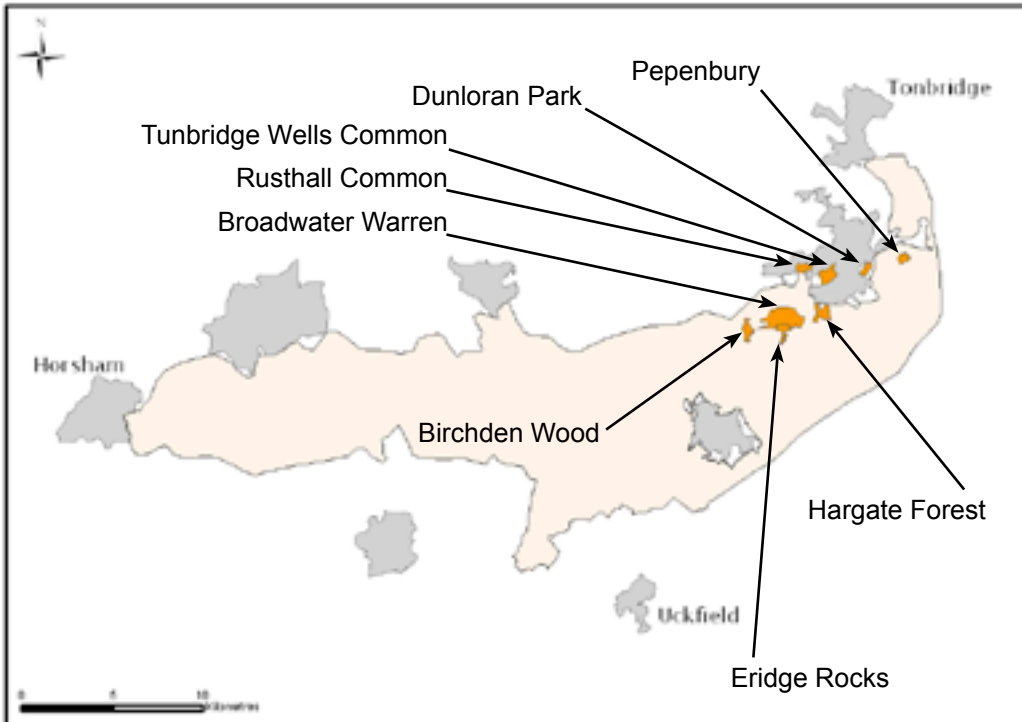
Key Outputs

- 4,000 copies of a pack of 8 map-based walks printed for parents with toddlers.
- One promotional video produced.
- Over 250 children and 260 adults attended 3 launch events.
- 4 WFR enhancement sites promoted through partnership working with KHWP.
- Over 45 nursery and parent & toddler groups engaged in project.

“We are happy to access less well-surfaced paths as long as the description on the website/leaflet is accurate, so that we know what to expect.”

“ We are happy to carry children or allow them to walk if we know the length and difficulty of the walk in advance.”

Respondents to consultation with parent and toddler groups



What Does the Future Hold?

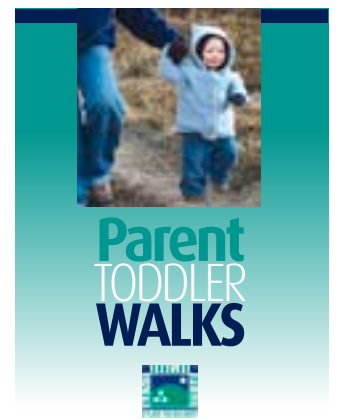
The project plan for the “Family Fun ...” project has ensured that its sustainability and legacy has been wrapped up within its delivery.

The responsibility for maintaining the promoted paths on the eight sites rests with the site managers. For three sites – Birchden Wood, Broadwater Warren and Hargate Forest – these paths have been enhanced through the WFR LPS, so there is a double insurance mechanism to maintain the investment. On two other sites – Dunorlan Park and Tunbridge Wells Common – tarmac or resin-bonded paths have been used and realistically will need no maintenance over the next 10 years.

There was a large print-run of the Parent Toddler Walks’ packs, and the Kent High Weald Partnership and High Weald AONB Unit will continue to distribute these after the WFR LPS formally closes. When this print run is finally exhausted, the web-based resources on both of these organisations’ websites will still be accessible; and with the increasing use of the internet by the public to access countryside sites’ information, this will be an important legacy arrangement.

“I was so delighted to receive a copy of the Parent Toddler Walks when I attended a baby music class in Tunbridge Wells ... It’s rare to receive something not only of interest but of real value – it seems daft to anyone without children, but to have a selection of short walks and know whether I should take the buggy or back carrier is important!”

Local Mum with two boys under four!



Partnerships

- ✓ ESAMP
- ✓ Explore Kent
- ✓ Forestry Commission
- ✓ Pepenbury
- ✓ RSPB
- ✓ Sussex Wildlife Trust
- ✓ Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- ✓ Tunbridge Wells Commons Conservators
- ✓ Woodland Trust

Match funding : Kent County Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.



Contact

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Public Celebration and Learning		n/a
Project Name	Value	
The Giant Maidens	£24,727	
Delivery Partner	Project Aim	
 	<p>To stage a specific launch activity in the first year of Scheme delivery, based on the Four Maidens theme.</p>	



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What Was Delivered?

The “Maidens of the Weald” are the cultural figures associated with the 1611 Polyolbion poem by Michael Drayton, and represent the remnants of the four medieval hunting forests – Ashdown, St Leonards, Tilgate and Broadwater – that lie within the Scheme area. Whilst not a project in its own right, this arts-inspired, Giant Maidens work was delivered by the Scheme Management Team under a single tender contract with the arts organisation, Same Sky. The three month programme of community engagement activities and celebratory events was set up to launch the WFR LPS, and ran from July to October 2009.

Same Sky had a major presence at the Scheme’s Launch event in Tunbridge Wells on 19th July, including the delivery of a drama performance by two youth theatre groups that interpreted the four Maidens.

Through August, four, week-long, artist-in-residence workshops were held in locations close to each of the four medieval forests. Local community groups and the general public were invited to drop in and help build a Giant Maiden depicting the particular Forest. These Maidens were 3m tall willow-framed sculptures, clothed to interpret their location.

In September, selected schools close to the four Forests took part in one-day workshops to produce lanterns for the later processional event. Four half-day workshops were also held with various groups to make lead banners for this same event.

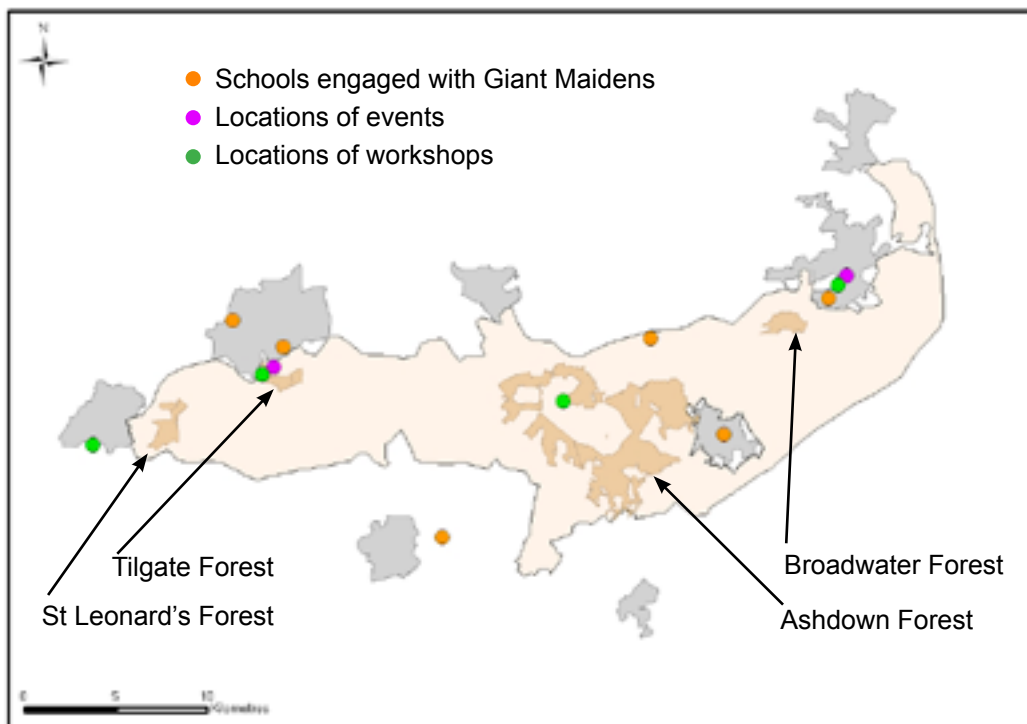
The Giant Maidens thread concluded with a dramatic, night-time celebration at Tilgate Park, Crawley, in early October 2009. The 500 attendees included school children involved in the lantern workshops, Scheme partners and the general public. In an event high on symbolism, four groups – representing each of the medieval forests – processed behind a musician past lit installations interpreting many of the heritage stories of the Weald Forest Ridge. At the end of the procession, each group was joined by its respective Giant Maiden as the dramatic, lake-side finale commenced. Amid spectacular pyrotechnics, the Maidens’ beating hearts were restored to their bodies; symbolising the start of a new era in the care and conservation of the four forests at the centre of the Weald Forest Ridge LPS.

Key Outputs

- 2 major public events staged – a Scheme Launch and Maidens Finale – with approx. 3,000 attendees.
- 6 schools and 181 children engaged in schools workshops.
- 8 other workshops staged to produce the 4 Maidens and other processional items.
- The 4 Maidens placed in semi-permanent locations after the Finale.

“It was one of the best organised launch events that I have been to.”

HLF Regional Committee Member



What Does the Future Hold?

The Giant Maidens thread was always designed as a standalone start to the Scheme – with a public event Launch and a Celebratory Finale. As such, it achieved all its objectives.

It was hoped it would act as inspiration for further, arts-related Scheme activity, and it achieved this in two ways during the duration of the Scheme. Firstly, it inspired “Spring Forward” in spring 2010 (see Public Celebration and Learning). Secondly, it inspired AshFest, which was delivered within the Discovering the Magic of Ashdown Forest project (see PA01, Public Celebration and Learning). There is always the potential that further arts-inspired work might be undertaken through specific Scheme partners now that the LP delivery phase has concluded.

Also, the Scheme Management Team was able to place all four of the Giant Maidens created during 2009, so that they could continue to be used and enjoyed by the community. Two were placed with schools local to their respective forests, where they have already acted as inspiration for curriculum-related work and been incorporated into community celebrations. The Tilgate Maiden was placed at Tilgate Park, alongside interpretation linking her to the Scheme, whilst the Ashdown Maiden took pride of place in the Ashdown Forest Centre Education Barn, before being transferred to a local school.

“The Finale Celebration was a great event and every member of the public I spoke to was really enthusiastic.”

Scheme Partner assisting at October Finale



© Jo Outram



Partnerships

- ✓ Broadwater CP School, Tunbridge Wells
- ✓ Chichester Festival Youth Theatre
- ✓ Conservators of Ashdown Forest
- ✓ Gatwick Greenspace Partnership
- ✓ Great Walstead School, Lindfield
- ✓ Mill Primary School, Crawley
- ✓ Oaks Primary School, Crawley
- ✓ Spiritus (Uckfield youth theatre group)
- ✓ St Mary the Virgin Primary School, Hartfield
- ✓ St Mary’s Catholic Primary School, Crowborough

Match funding: (funded through WFR Scheme Management Programme)

Contact

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Public Celebration and Learning		n/a
Project Name	Value	
Spring Forward	£9,485	
Delivery Partner	Project Aim	
	n/a (incorporated within wider Scheme objectives)	



What Was Delivered?

Building on the Giant Maidens work from the Scheme Launch in 2009, the decision was taken in early 2010 by the WFR Scheme Management Team to stage another public, arts-related event, supported through the Scheme Management budget. Same Sky were again appointed through a single tender process to develop and deliver the event, and very constructive links were built with the Education Resources at Ashdown Forest project (see PA36, Learning in Schools): to ensure best value and maximal people engagement was achieved.

“Spring Forward” was hence developed as a participative event to greet the start of spring and to celebrate some of the core WFR heritage messages about woodlands and, especially, heathlands. Partnership working with the PA36 project saw Spring Forward being staged on the evening of 22nd April 2010, following on from a Schools’ Creative Arts Day at the Ashdown Forest Centre. School children and other families attending Spring Forward firstly made processional head-dresses and spring-related ephemera, before undertaking a live music-led procession around the adjacent heathland of Ashdown Forest. The event concluded with a celebratory dance.

Key Outputs

- 1 public celebration event staged at Ashdown Forest, with 200 attendees.



What Does the Future Hold?

Whilst delivered as a one-off event, it was hoped Spring Forward might inspire Delivery Partners or other local attractions to stage similar events in the future. As such, it had been designed to be transferable to other sites in future years. It did lead to AshFest being staged at the Ashdown Forest Centre in 2011 (see PA01, Public Celebration and Learning), although no other partners have so far taken the ideas beyond this.

Partnerships

- ✓ Buxted County Primary School
- ✓ Conservators of Ashdown Forest
- ✓ Nutley County Primary School
- ✓ St Mary the Virgin CEP School, Hartfield
- ✓ Wealden District Council

Match funding: (funded through WFR Scheme Management Programme, with additional support from Wealden District Council).

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