



We hope that this email finds you safe and well. It has been an extraordinary 15 months but, despite the challenges faced, work has continued at the Heart of England Forest, and we wanted to update you about the plans for the land near to your home.

Green Recovery Challenge Fund Grant

Green Recovery Challenge Fund



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The
National Lottery
Heritage Fund



Environment
Agency



We ended 2020 with the amazing news that we had secured a £1.7m Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) grant. The fund, being delivered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency, has been allocated to projects that benefit nature, climate, and society.

This fund is transformative for the charity, enabling us to make significant progress today whilst establishing long-term foundations to grow the Forest further tomorrow, and will have wide reaching benefits for the region. Excitingly, the Forest at Binton will play a part in some of the important work of this project.

One of the key aims of the project is the creation of a social enterprise tree nursery, which will be based on our land at Luddington. Not only will the tree nursery provide local employment and training opportunities, including for adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and for volunteers, when fully established it will grow 2.5 million native trees annually on one of the fields used previously for arable crops.

Not only will this complement our ongoing work establishing a huge new Forest, enabling us to be more sustainable by growing more of our own saplings to plant out in the Forest,

but it will also support Government's ambitious but vital planting targets.

We were really pleased to hear how positive the local community was about our consultation last year. There will be about 100 acres of woodland creation including a community woodland in the two arable fields below the farmyard, with other land grazed to improve the biodiversity value of the existing grassland.

As COVID-19 restrictions continue to ease, we will hold an on-site 'walk and talk' event which will give you the chance to learn more about these plans and to ask any questions you may have. Further information will be sent out, but in the meantime, you can [read more about the GRCF project in this article](#) that featured in our recent supporter magazine.

Farmland bird surveys

Breeding bird surveys began across the land in the spring this year. These will provide a baseline of which farmland birds are present on and across the site. Surveying helps inform our plans for managing the land to conserve and restore bird numbers in the Forest.

Invertebrate surveys

We will be undertaking a range of invertebrate (butterfly/dragonfly/ true flies/beetles/bees, etc) surveys across the site starting in late May and finishing in August (weather permitting). This will improve our knowledge of this important and diverse group of animals present on the site and assist when we are planning the management of the site in a wildlife friendly manner.

With pollinators responsible for one in every three mouthfuls of the food that we eat, we are keen to ensure that the mosaic of habitats in the Forest provides suitable homes to encourage these vital creatures.

Help to design your community woodland

We would like you to be involved in finalising the design of the community woodland being planned at Binton, so we will be inviting you to attend an event with Stephen, our Head Forester. This is currently in the planning stages, but more information will be emailed shortly, so please look out for your invite in your inbox.



An aerial view

Finally, at the end of February we commissioned a videographer to capture drone footage of the land at Binton and we wanted you to be the first to see it - [click here to view](#). We will take further footage over time to capture and record how the Forest is created here.

Best wishes

The Heart of England Forest team
