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**FOREST**



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# Foresters' Forest National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Partnership Programme in the Forest of Dean



# 4. Legacy

## 4.1 Project legacy arrangements

The majority of FF Projects have completed forms focussing on their planned legacy. A key outcome from the Programme is that 26 out of the initial 38 projects are planning to continue operation into the future (Tables 17 and 18). A large proportion of the Stronghold for Nature projects will continue with support from Forestry England and other partners that have been involved with delivery (e.g. RSPB, GWT, BTO). These are the projects that have had a management focus based on improving the condition of the natural heritage (Biodiversity) of the Forest. FoD volunteers, some with key expertise (e.g. ██████████ on Reptiles), will also be involved in project delivery, in relation to Reptiles, Dean Meadows, Butterflies, Wetscape, and Blakeney Weir. The four projects not continuing, mostly involved with collecting and recording information, are unlikely to develop further because their tasks are complete

Only three of the Exploring our Forest projects will continue. Heritage Open Days will operate as before, delivered through the MCTI Partnership based in Coleford, Walking with Wheels will continue to operate and the Worcester Walk project will continue to develop but be re-labelled as 'Friends of Worcester Walk'.

The four projects under the Revealing our Past theme will continue but mostly at a lower level of activity and will be reliant on obtaining funding from other sources.

The majority of projects under the Celebrating our Forest and Securing our Future themes will continue. Rewild will deliver Heritage Craft Skills, Edible Forest, and New Leaf, operating out of ██████ y Sheds under a Forestry England licence agreement and funding activities from other ██████ es. Love Your Forest will continue to be delivered through a partnership between Forestry England, local authorities and the private sector. Community Celebration will be run by Wyldwood Arts but along with Reading the Forest and Scarr Bandstand will need to find other sources of funding to achieve their objectives.

Projects targeted at the younger generation have a more uncertain future. Youth Rangers will continue to be delivered through Wye Valley AONB whilst, the future of the Forest Explorers will depend on continued volunteer activity but overseen in the short term by GWT and Forestry England, and the existing materials from the Working with Schools project will be promoted through West Gloucestershire Schools Partnership. The Freemining Association will continue its work of maintaining cultural heritage and funding activities through operation of the briquetting machine.

The dependence on Forestry England support for the continuation of activities is high for a significant number of projects that operate on Forestry England land and require licences to continue their work (7 projects), or expert/supervisory advice and support from personnel (8 projects). This reliance illustrates the key role played by Forestry England in underpinning the FF Programme activities utilising the Forestry England estate.

Table 17. Planned approach for projects continuing after March 2022

	Projects Continuing after March 2022	Planned approach
Stronghold for Nature	Conservation Grazing	Continued by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, under agreement with Forestry England
	Birds	Continued by British Trust for Ornithology volunteers, liaising with RSPB and Forestry England
	Community Wildlife Study Group	Continues as Wildlife Study Group, directed by Forestry England
	Reptiles	Continued by ██████████, working with Forestry England
	Wetscape, Waterways, Ponds and Mires	Ponds work continued by ██████████, Waterways volunteering will continue, directed by Forestry England
	Blakeney Weir	Volunteers will continue to monitor the eel pass each Spring
	Butterflies	Continued by Forestry England and local volunteers
	Deans Marvellous Meadows	Dean Meadows Group will continue
Exploring our Forest	Heritage Open Days	Continued by Coleford Area MCTI Partnership
	Walking with Wheels	Countryside Mobility will continue the Tramper service, working with Forest Holidays, The Speech House Hotel and Forestry England
	Worcester Walk Community Project	Continued under licence from Forestry England, finding funds for future activities
Revealing our Past	Buried Heritage	The LIDAR Survey element will continue, led by Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service and supported by Forestry England
	Voices from the Forest	Will continue, likely to need external funds
	Forest Oral History	Dean Heritage Centre will continue this work
	Heritage Craft Skills	Rewild Project will continue this work, with other funds
Celebrating our Forest	Community Celebration	Wyldwood Arts plan to continue community projects, supported by other funds
	Edible Forest	The Rewild Project will continue this work, with other funds
	Love your Forest	Love Your Forest campaign will continue: partnership of Forestry England and Forest of Dean District Council
	Reading the Forest	Will continue, likely to need external funds
Securing the Future	Scarr Bandstand	Will continue under licence from Forestry England, seeking external funds to rebuild the roof on the bandstand
	A future for Freemining	Will continue. Freeminers Association may need funds, depending on income from sales of briquettes
	A future for Commoning	Local grazier will continue, working with Forestry England
	Forest Explorers	Will continue, hopefully run by volunteers, supported by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust & Forestry England
	New Leaf	The Rewild Project will continue this work, with other funds
	Youth Rangers	Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will continue with Youth Rangers
	Working with Schools	Learning Resources from various projects transferred to West Gloucestershire Schools Partnership (WGSP) which will continue to promote their use amongst schools in the Forest

Table 18. Proposed actions in relation to projects not continuing after March 2022

	Projects Not continuing	Proposed action
Stronghold for Nature	Batscape	Continued by Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat SAC (Special Area of Conservation) Policy document
	Woodland Flora	Project Complete. Forestry England will use information gathered.
	Ancient and Notable Trees	Project Complete. Forestry England will use information gathered.
	Veteran Trees History	Project Complete. Forestry England will use information gathered.
Exploring our Forest	Bream Heritage Walk	██████████ will continue to oversee the route, working with Forestry England, and will provide supplies of the walk leaflet
	Hidden Heritage App	Complete. All three apps will continue to be available to download for FREE: Hidden Heritage of the Dean, Coleford's Hidden Heritage, Cinderford's Hidden Heritage
Revealing our Past	Built Heritage	Project Complete
	Forest Dialect	Project Complete
	Geology	Project Complete
Celebrating our Forest	Forest Musical Landscape	Project Complete
	Mindscape	Project Complete
	Interpretation and events	Project Complete. Identifying partner organisations who can host some Foresters' Forest website content FOD Local History Society, Dean Archaeology Group and West Gloucestershire Schools Partnership

## 4.2 Long-term legacy of the Foresters' Forest Programme

Stakeholders were asked for their perceptions of the longer-term legacy of the Foresters' Forest Programme. The views of two local authorities interviewed at the end of 2021 are summarised in Table 19. Interviewees noted the value of improved condition of the natural and built heritage, and of enhanced awareness of the Forest of Dean heritage. The most important legacy outcomes were identified for people and communities in terms of access to the physical assets developed (such as the Heritage Apps), volunteer involvement, and "a *'re-valuing' of the 'Forester' by other people*" suggesting there is a higher level of respect for those who have lived in the Forest all their lives (and/or are 'born and bred') in terms of the embedded knowledge and memories they hold, some of which will have been passed down from previous generations. The extent of such views is unknown, but it does suggest that a greater awareness of the value of the cultural heritage has seeped into the wider community, possibly as a result of projects such as Reading the Forest, Voices of the Forest, the murals and plaques that have been created in the local towns, and the Schools project.

Coleford Town Council interviewees admitted that there were “*Lots of possibilities in terms of what will realistically happen*” in the long-term but stated that “*...it would be a travesty to lose the stronger connections that the community has developed because there has never been a better opportunity to work with Forestry England*”. Coleford TC interviewees also suggested there had been missed opportunities for the town council to work with community anchor organisations.

Local authorities were also careful not to put too much emphasis on the FF programme as the sole causal mechanism for the changes identified. Interviewees noted that many of the organisations operating across the Forest were already in existence before the programme started, they accessed the funding that became available and now that the programme is finishing the perception was that they will reduce their level of activities and operate at a smaller scale in the future. The Town Council was aware of the benefits the Programme had created, however, and were keen to ensure these are not lost once the ‘FF umbrella’ disappears.

*“The way I see it is we started out with some organisations already existing, we expanded because of FF and when it’s gone we will continue going on, but reduced again. It’s now more about the individual organisations building back their own identity again into the future.”*

*“Changes have come not just from FF. There is an increased awareness about the heritage of the Forest. The FF plays a part in that and Covid also played a part because people were forced to start looking more closely at their local area and going for local walks, discovering places they had never visited.”*

(Coleford Town Council Interview, 2021)

Forestry England also suggested that in terms of physical benefits for the Forest, some activities that were operating previously were badged under the Foresters’ Forest Programme and would revert to carrying on operations as they had before the programme started. Examples given include the Birds, Reptiles, and Butterfly projects. Other activities, such as Wetscapes, would not have occurred without the Foresters’ Forest funding and support and this was identified as significant through highlighting the importance of the waterways that will change thinking about Forest planning and management (Forestry England, 2021).

**Table 19. Local Council perceptions of the long-lasting effects from the Foresters' Forest Programme**

Long-term outcome	Description	
For heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There is an increased awareness about the heritage of the Forest.</li> <li>➤ Lasting outcomes will be better habitats and environments in some areas of the Forest and safeguarding of the industrial heritage.</li> </ul>	<p>Coleford TC</p> <p>FoD district Council</p>
For people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The open days and the Coleford Area Walking Festival – we always include 3 or 4 elements of the FF in this event.</li> <li>➤ It's amazing how many local people don't know the area. Things like Bream heritage walk really add value.</li> <li>➤ Those people who got involved had good experiences - we had a thousand unique volunteers.</li> <li>➤ There has been a 're-valuing' of the 'Forester' by other people – incomers and even by those who have lived here for decades. A re-valuing of those born and bred here for what they know about the area and the culture, for their cultural heritage, memories, and knowledge of what went before handed down from previous generations through family stories.</li> </ul>	<p>Coleford TC</p>
For communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increased awareness about the heritage of the Forest.</li> <li>➤ Opportunities provided to local organisations to expand their membership and activities</li> <li>➤ The improvements to heritage will require engaging people to take ownership of the resources. To a certain extent this can be undertaken by existing community groups such as the Forest of Dean Local History Society and the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.</li> </ul>	<p>Coleford TC</p> <p>FoD district Council</p>
Material resources/ assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Physical assets such as the Apps and the walks (Bream Heritage walk, Coleford Heritage App) Worcester walk, Geology Trail and App).</li> <li>➤ The educational resources, for example the book just published – a fantastic publication - there's a very high demand for it.</li> <li>➤ The survey data collected will be useful, it will feed through into local plans for years to come.</li> <li>➤ Expressed hope that some of the material improvements would have a longer life span (e.g. the eel pass at Blakeney weir) but will require volunteer input and support.</li> </ul>	<p>Coleford TC</p> <p>FoD district Council</p>
Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The networks that have developed among organisations involved in programme delivery</li> <li>➤ Stronger community connections developed with Forestry England</li> <li>➤ The Forest Forum will survive as Forestry England will always need a partnership element for their community work.</li> </ul>	<p>Coleford TC</p> <p>FoD district Council</p>

### Project Leader Group Discussion

Project Leaders were also asked about their perception of the future in relation to community engagement with the Forest (Table 20). The group agreed that “...a lot of projects will require a low level of funding to keep going in the future”, which would be difficult for some which may not survive. Project Leaders made reference to similar issues to those highlighted by local authorities. Training of younger people, materials resources (e.g. school packs), and capital investments in building, machinery and land were all identified as key elements of their project legacies. Discussants also noted the need for Forestry England licences to continue operations, and future funding for maintenance and operational activities, although in most cases the need was for small annual amounts of funding rather than large scale grants.

**Table 20. Project Leaders Discussion Group: Perception of the long-lasting effects from the Foresters’ Forest Programme**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Description</b>
Buried Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Building a website to be hosted by the Dean Archaeological Group.</li> <li>➤ The Group has been refreshed as a result of the FF programme and the hosting fees will be funded for 3 years.</li> <li>➤ Forestry England wants to continue the Lidar work and there are school packs for teachers</li> </ul>
Conservation Grazing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue grazing. Already have new agreement with Forestry England.</li> </ul>
Freemining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Trained younger people. Improvements to training are a key legacy of the programme and we have identified needs and are sending people on courses where needed.</li> <li>➤ Major legacy was purchase of a building and a briquetting machine (to enable utilisation of small coal that could otherwise not be sold); will make Freemining financially more sustainable in the future.</li> <li>➤ Established a CIC to administer the briquetting machine.</li> <li>➤ The FF programme provided support for specialist training in addition to that delivered in the traditional manner, i.e. the older, experienced miners, training the younger ones. Positive outcomes include more mines being open and more people learning about mining that at any time since the 1980s.</li> </ul>
Worcester Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ We have formed ‘Friends of Worcester Walk’. We are designing a logo.</li> <li>➤ We will continue with an Forestry England licence – there is conservation work that needs doing each year</li> <li>➤ A lot of the capital investment work is done but the land will still need managing. Funding will be an issue; some money will be required for scything and mowing.</li> </ul>
Bream Heritage Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ We have created a walk along public footpaths and on Forestry England land.</li> <li>➤ Signage has been put up on big posts and they will last for quite a while.</li> <li>➤ The big issue is paying for a re-print of the guidebook (brochure &amp; map) hoping to get some sponsorship to pay for a print run.</li> </ul>
Group discussion on Forest Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ So much has been done and it will not cost much to maintain it, there are enough younger people involved now to carry it on.</li> <li>➤ Future will require a lead organisation. A body will be required to pull down funding, administrate, and coordinate activity into the future</li> </ul>

One of the PL discussion groups spent time exploring the need for a lead organisation, how it might operate, and what role it might play. Discussants noted the issue had been discussed multiple times over the previous couple of years. The idea of a Forest Forum that could encompass the 38 projects was explored but those present were asking themselves how it would be constituted and what it would do. Two options put forward were for an organisation that is more of a discussion group and means of communicating information versus one that 'had a few teeth' and would be prepared to challenge and influence policy makers. A range of options were discussed but no agreement on the way forward. The group noted it was an issue that needed to be resolved before the FF Programme ended.

### Volunteer perspective on the Legacy

Perceptions of the long-lasting impacts or effects from projects was explored in two volunteer discussion groups. Volunteers identified outcomes directly related to the projects they had worked on; specific benefits were identified such as the survey data generated, the capital investments (weir bypass, fencing, heritage apps). There was also a high level of concern expressed for the future of projects that they had worked on and what would happen after the project ended (Table 21).

Volunteers noticed several changes in project leadership and were concerned at the loss of expertise; they indicated a desire to maintain involvement but the need for leadership. There was also a strong feeling of not knowing or understanding what was happening to projects, and what the future might hold. Overall the hope was expressed that the FF programme would be able continue in some form and that they would be able to engage in project activities, and maintain the friendships and social relations that had been developed:

*"The fellowship of Forest friends and Forest people that I've met. It has inspired me to do more volunteering. It's not just the experts I met but the friends I have made."*

(Volunteer Discussion Group, 2021)



**Table 21. Volunteers Discussion Group: Perception of the long-lasting effects from the Foresters' Forest Programme**

Long-term outcome	Description
For heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Wildlife projects increased the biodiversity,</li> <li>➤ It captured the Forest information e.g. the wildlife surveys, the Oral histories.</li> <li>➤ The Lidar survey work is in progress, to cover the remaining areas of the Forest, finding anomalies in an area and producing data.</li> <li>➤ We are still monitoring the impact of the weir bypass.</li> <li>➤ Fencing to enable conservation grazing</li> <li>➤ The Sphagnum Moss survey data</li> </ul>
For people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Geoheritage Apps walk, the Hidden Heritage apps - those things won't fade away.</li> <li>➤ The FF project proved a lot of people want to get involved. The concern is who will take it on if they (the project leaders, the experts) move on. For example, with Wetscape a key Leader is leaving, and no-one has stepped forward.</li> <li>➤ With New Leaf I've no idea what's happening. I've no idea who owns the shed or the equipment. One of the Leaders has moved on. There are a lot of disadvantaged people who get a lot out of that project.</li> <li>➤ The change in people involved – they have come out of the woodwork. We have been trained, for example in surveys of invertebrates and we are now thinking of setting up groups of volunteers to carry on the survey. Some of the volunteers still want to do that.</li> <li>➤ We have created a body of people who know each other now but we need someone to stand up and coordinate things. It would be good to find a way to keep things going. ██████████ acted as a channel of communication.</li> <li>➤ We had a training course on doing small surveys and the Sphagnum Moss people are keen to get together to keep it going.</li> </ul>
For local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The history book that was developed for schools.</li> <li>➤ Worcester Walk changed the local landscape for the better.</li> </ul>

## 4.3 Future threats and potential opportunities to further develop project outputs/benefits

A wide range of stakeholders agreed that a significant number of groups involved with FF projects would continue beyond March 2022. Many groups that will continue were in existence before the FF Programme started and will pick up where they left off, but with less funding. Examples include:

- Forest of Dean Local History Society (it was there before – it will be there afterwards)
- Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) (a stronger presence in the Forest than previously)
- Reading the Forest (there is a real commitment that it will continue)
- Rewild (now has access to alternative sources of funding for some of its activities)
- Dean Meadows Group (it was there before – it will be there afterwards)
- Freeminers (now stronger and more confident than previously)

The FF survey of projects indicates that 26 out of the 38 projects intend to continue, although as noted in Section 4.1, a considerable number rely on Forestry England for support and permits to undertake their activities, and most will have to find alternative sources of funding.

There are potential opportunities to build on the capital investments, body of work, volunteer skills, and good will generated through the five years of the FF Programme. Forestry England also has an outline strategy for future community engagement in its 'Our Shared Forest' document. This identifies potential Forestry England commitments in the future, focusing a lot on the natural and Built Heritage as well as commitment to seeing the Lidar work continue (Forestry England Interview, 2021).

A perceived threat to building on the FF Programme is the slow progress being made over creation of a community-based organisation that will coordinate and lead activities. Stakeholders interviewed about community engagement over the next five to ten years expressed some frustration at the slow progress and lack of agreement over how to move forward from the FF Programme. One suggestion put forward has been for a Forest Forum, perhaps formed from the existing Community Stakeholder Group of the FF Programme. The model would have a minimum of 2 meetings per year and an opportunity for all existing groups in the FF, and new ones, to come together to discuss issues, celebrate achievements, and share their experience and knowledge of the heritage of the FoD. Forestry England have offered to fund a Secretariat for whatever organisation is created (Forestry England Interview, 2021).

Two key sticking points revolve around the nature and role of the Forum and getting agreement on who would lead or chair it. One suggestion put forward is for the Verderers to take a more active role, but this is not universally supported.

More generally the biodiversity crisis is viewed as a potential threat (Forestry England Interview 2021) across the UK based on the lack of understanding of ecological relationships within a largely urban community. The lack of understanding makes it difficult to *"...get volunteers out to play an active part in monitoring the environment and being advocates for*

*change*” but a future opportunity for the Forest of Dean is the Biosphere Reserve Bid with a committee that is currently being considered. Forestry England noted that such a bid offered an opportunity that has not been available to the Forest of Dean area for a long time:

*“The ‘core forest’ has been pushed in for hundreds of years by industry and urban development – a biosphere reserve would be an opportunity for it to breathe out again and push outwards into the wider landscape.”*

(Forestry England Interview, 2021)

Coleford Town Council noted that the FF Programme created a funding opportunity to undertake a wide range of activities and also brought in new people with different skills. One interviewee identified the Apps as creating opportunities to attract more visitors and demonstrate the cultural heritage of the Forest. Interviewees indicated potential opportunities from building on new information on the Mushet family and what they did in the area, suggesting they could perhaps work with the Dean Heritage Centre on a ‘Festival of Mushet’.