



THE NATIONAL
FOREST

Developing sustainable tourist accommodation

Early market engagement exercise





Introduction

Join us in shaping the future of sustainable tourism in the National Forest.

We invite operators, investors, agents, designers, and manufacturers specialising in sustainable tourist accommodation to join us as part of our early market engagement exercise. Together, we aim to bring forward a new wave of investment in sustainable tourism development across the National Forest.

Over the past 30 years, we've transformed 200 square miles of the National Forest, spanning parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Staffordshire, into a pioneering sustainable tourism destination. Our vision goes beyond this; we aim for the National Forest to be enjoyed, recognised, and celebrated as an exemplary low carbon tourism destination that enhances nature and improves wellbeing for both its communities and visitors.

Partnering with us offers a unique opportunity to contribute to this dynamic and growing sustainable destination. With a supportive planning framework, central location, and access to new audiences, you can share in the Forest's success. We have identified potential development sites and, in collaboration with our Local Planning Authorities, created a Sustainable Tourist Accommodation Design Guide. This guide highlights seven core sustainable design principles that showcase the Forest's commitment to low carbon impact, green jobs, and innovative integration with the landscape.

If our vision for sustainable tourism excites you, we invite you to join us in creating a positive future - a future that's better with trees.

John Everitt
Chief Executive,
National Forest Company



30 years of transformation

Over the past 30 years, a quiet revolution has taken place across 200 square miles of the Midlands, covering parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Staffordshire.

More than 9.5 million trees have taken root in what was once one of the least wooded parts of the country, gradually expanding and interconnecting a landscape once scarred by coal mining and clay extraction, into a rich tapestry of habitats, woodlands, revitalised economies, and thriving communities.

The impact has been dramatic, increasing Forest cover from as low as 6% in 1991 to 25% of the land area today. This has transformed the landscape from black to green and has created a growing sustainable tourism destination that demonstrates how trees can be used as a catalyst for real change, delivering benefits for people, nature, and the economy.



Before



Hicks Lodge



Rawdon Colliery

After



Hicks Lodge: The National Forest Cycle Centre



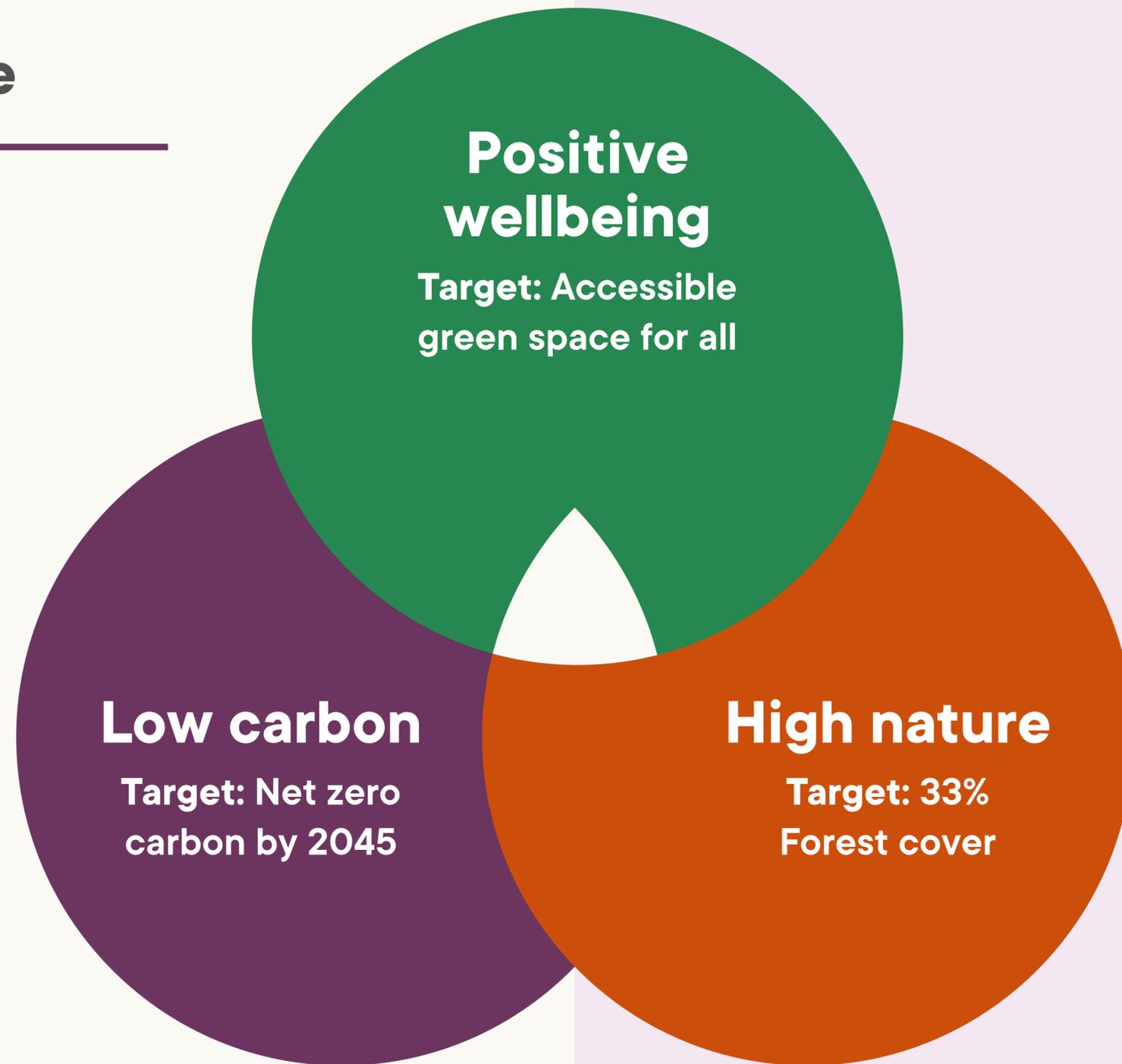
Conkers

A model for positive change

Today, the National Forest is a maturing forest landscape, but our vision goes beyond just trees. We want the National Forest to be a place where people, nature, and the economy are growing together – a living model of sustainability in action.

Working with farmers, landowners, businesses, and communities, we are creating a place that demonstrates the transformative impact of trees; with happier and healthier communities, thriving wildlife, clearer air and water, and more sustainable businesses. It is an ambitious vision that can prove what is possible with collective action and gives renewed hope for a positive future in the face of climate change.

With your help, we can continue to grow it together.



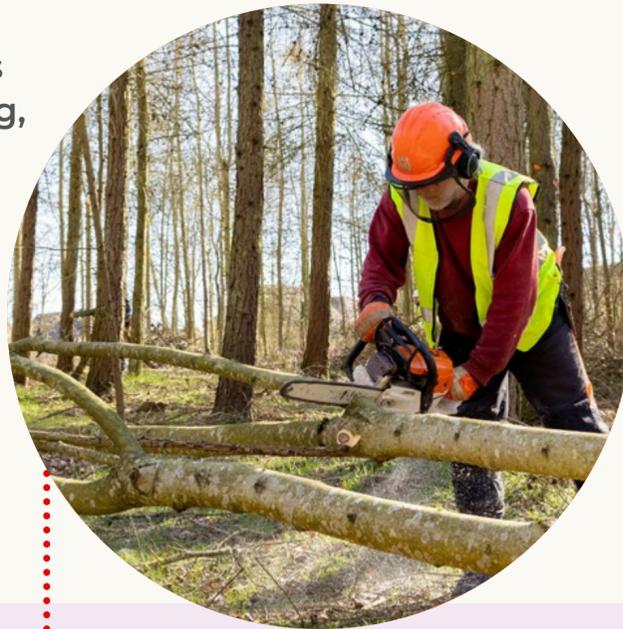
Our ways of working

We work using policy, partnerships, grants, advice, and support to deliver the National Forest. Our model is focused on five main themes of creating, managing, inspiring, engaging, and growing.



Creating

We're transforming the landscape, creating new woodlands, and bringing trees to urban areas.



Managing

We're managing woodlands and other habitats to improve their condition so that wildlife can thrive.



Inspiring

We're encouraging activities that inspire people about the Forest to increase understanding, enjoyment, and use.



Engaging

We're creating access and providing opportunities where everyone can get more involved to improve wellbeing.



Growing

We're developing the green economy and supporting sustainable businesses that are connected to trees and woodlands.

A growing visitor destination

The National Forest acts as a green lung for the nearby cities of Birmingham, Derby, Leicester, and Nottingham. Being rooted right in the heart of the country means that it is also an easily accessible destination for many across the UK.

It is a gentle, revitalising destination that enables families and friends to enjoy adventures in nature together.

Visitors can explore the Forest's industrial heritage, walk through bluebell woods and deer parks, participate in forest bathing or bushcraft, cycle off-road tracks, and use the extensive network of trails for walking or running. The Forest is a landscape of opportunities and discovery, continually evolving as we develop and grow the visitor experience with our partners.

Visitor experience development priorities:



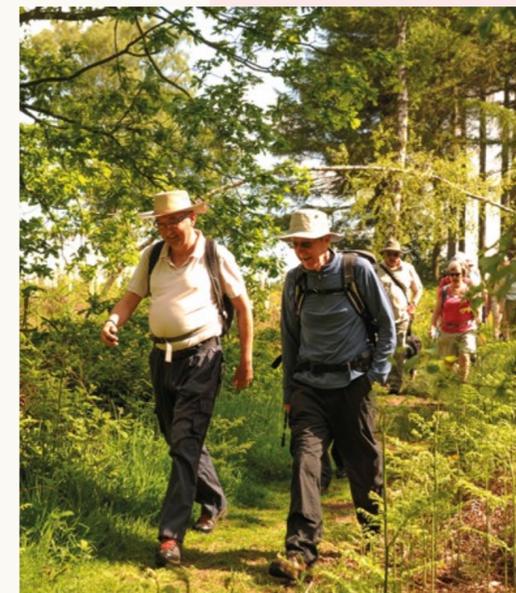
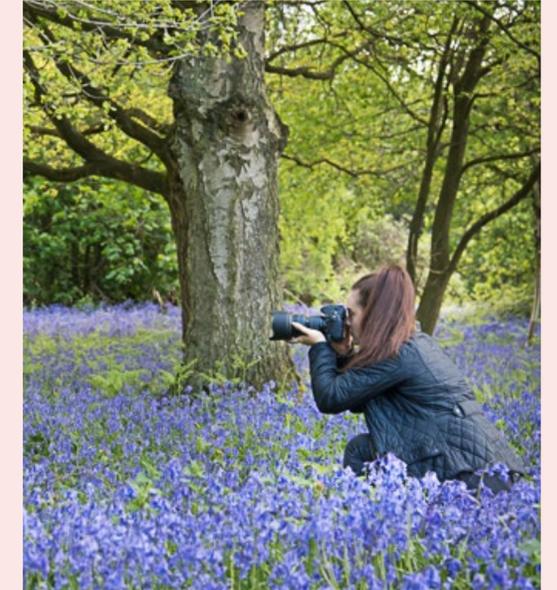
We will transform Conkers into Britain's most inspirational natural adventure destination and establish it as a 'basecamp' to encourage visitors to explore the whole Forest.



We will support the National Memorial Arboretum to regenerate 10.1 hectares of former quarry land into a living memorial woodland to honour those who served and died in the COVID-19 pandemic.



We will support the Charnwood Landscape Partnership's UNESCO Geopark bid to highlight Charnwood Forest's geology, celebrate its history, and promote a sustainable future.





9.5 million
trees have been planted



8.2 million
visitors each year

Over 10 million people
within a 90-minute drive



St George's Park

Home to all 23 of the English Football Association's teams



Burton upon Trent

Britain's beer capital



Calke Abbey

The East Midlands' second most visited paid attraction after Chatsworth



209,000
residents

£576m
visitor economic impact per annum

70%
of forest sites provide access to the public



Conkers

The award-winning visitor attraction in the Heart of the National Forest

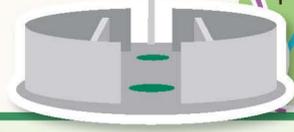


Charnwood Forest's rocks formed nearly
600 million
years ago



The National Memorial Arboretum

The UK's year-round centre of remembrance



Home to the
75-mile National Forest Way



Over 71%
of UK population



within a 3-hour drive

320km
of promoted walks



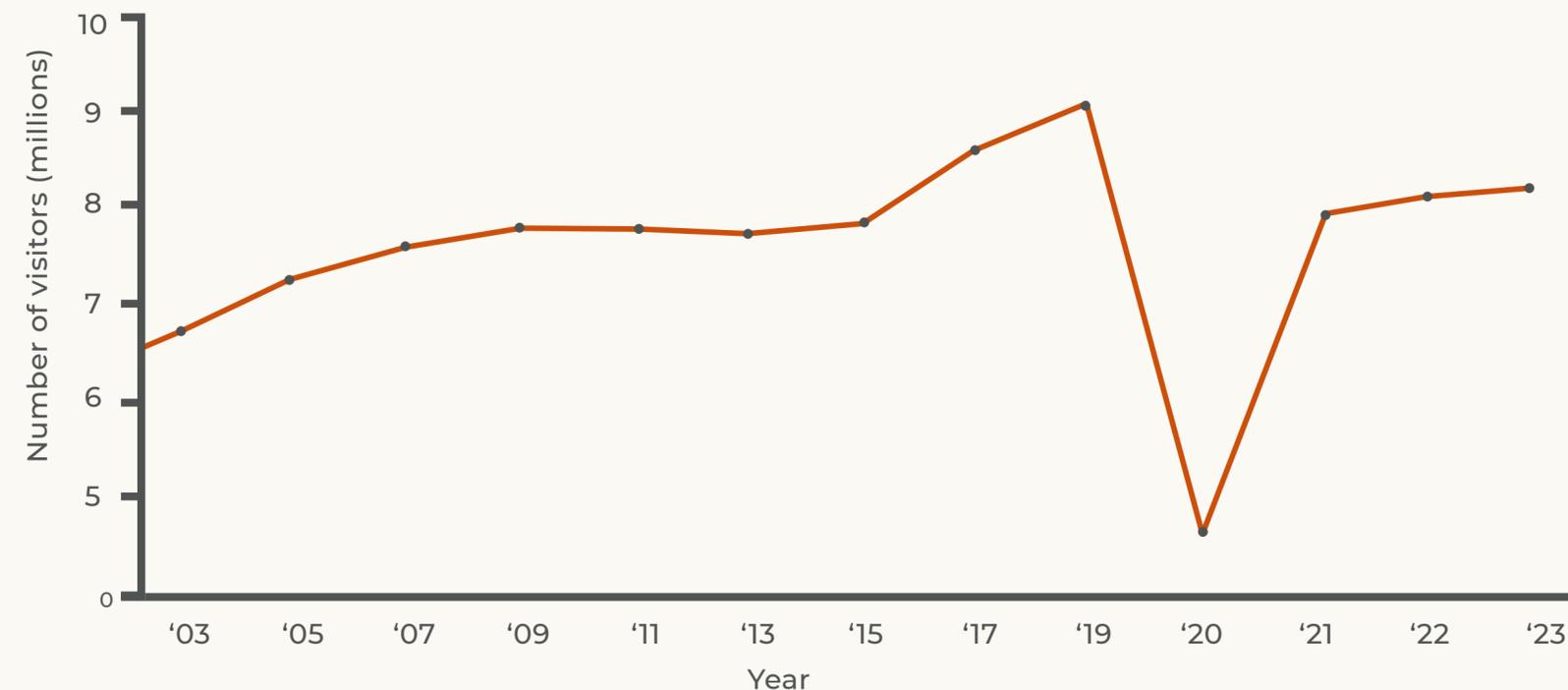
A great place to invest in

Together with our partners and tourism businesses, we see a significant opportunity over the next decade to enhance the destination experience.

This involves leveraging the Forest's brand and unique features to expand the range of activities available, ensuring consistent quality throughout the year. Key priorities include boosting overnight accommodation options, refining the brand, creating distinctive visitor experiences, and enhancing the overall appeal of the Forest as a 'must visit' destination for all.

Capitalise on the growing number of visitors

Visitor numbers to the National Forest have increased from 6.8 million in 2003 to 9.1 million in 2019. After the COVID-19 pandemic, numbers are recovering, with 8.2 million visitors in 2023.*



* Global Tourism Solutions STEAM Economic Impact Assessment 2003 -2023

Three reasons to invest in the National Forest



Make the most of a flexible planning environment

Without designations such as those covering National Parks and other protected landscapes, planning policy in the National Forest can be more flexible and is generally supportive of responsible tourism development.



Attract new customers and secure repeat visitors

The National Forest's central location means it has a large audience within a 90-minute drive time. This provides excellent opportunities to attract new markets and convert existing day visitors into overnight stays.



Become part of the green economy

Sustainable tourism aligns to the National Forest's 25-year vision for a greener future, and consumer appetite for it is growing. Approached sensitively, tourism can become a vital low carbon sector at the heart of an emerging green economy.

A pipeline of opportunities

To accelerate the National Forest's development as a flagship sustainable tourism destination, we have developed a pioneering design guide for sustainable tourist accommodation.

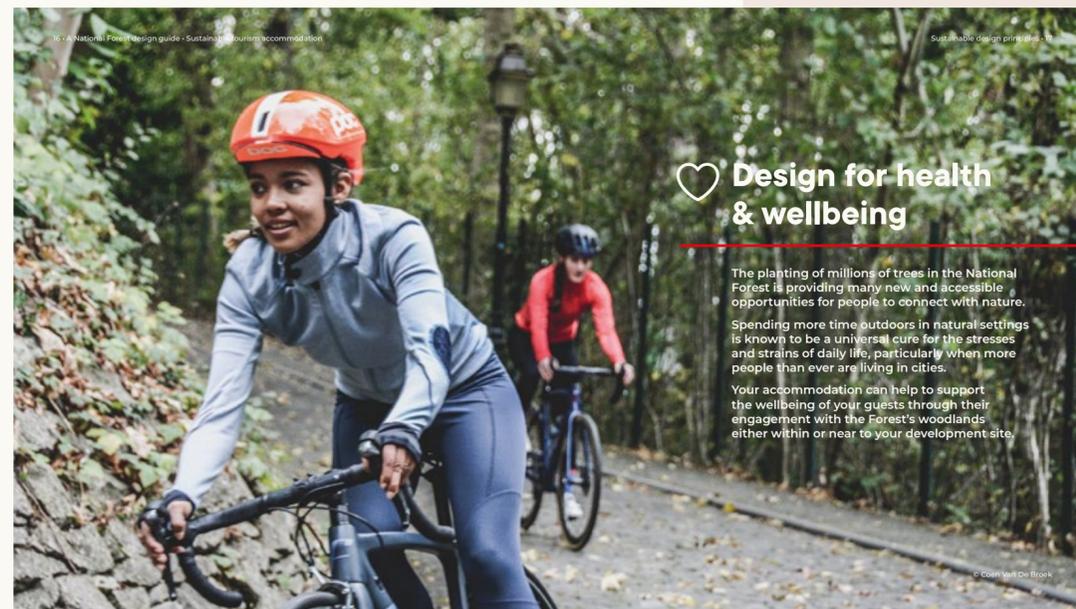
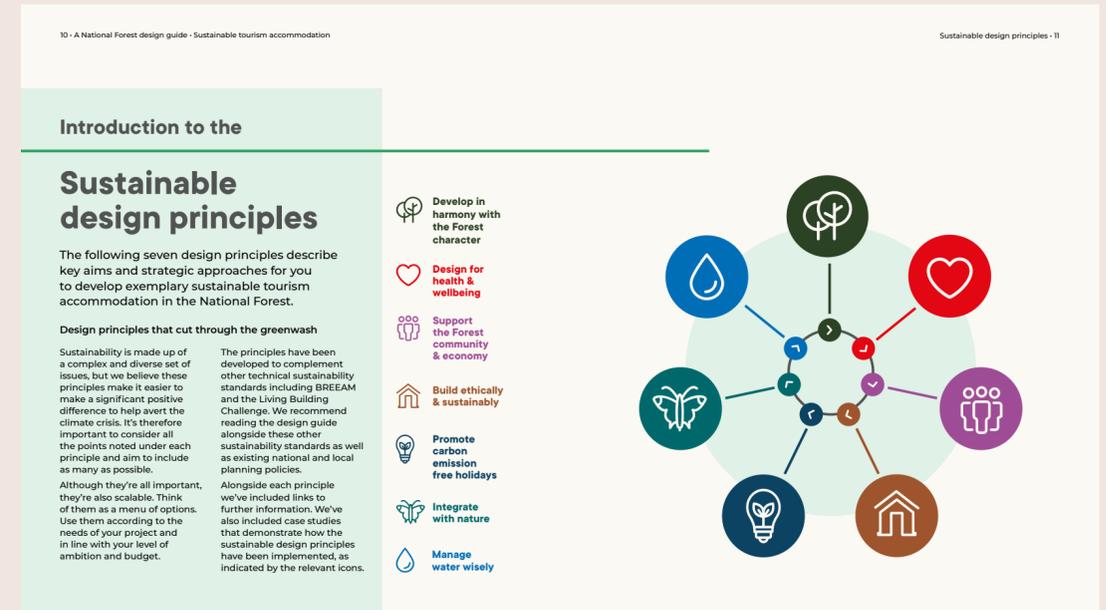
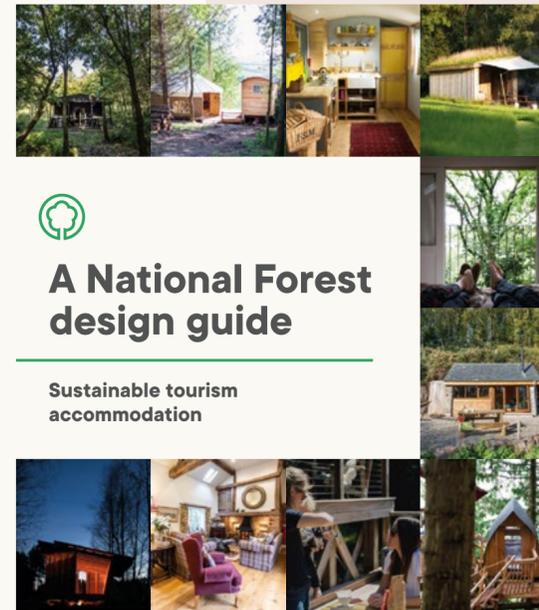
The guide supports the sector's journey to net zero and promotes responsible development that enhances the National Forest's unique character and sense of place.

It outlines seven key sustainability principles applicable to various accommodation types. Adhering to these principles allows developers to demonstrate the benefits of sustainable development for the local community and environment, distinguish themselves from competitors, comply with future legislation, and achieve long-term savings and improved returns on investment.

To view the guide, please follow this link.

[Click here >](#)

Produced with input from Local Planning Authorities, the guide may be considered in planning applications, with future local plans expected to align with the design guide principles.

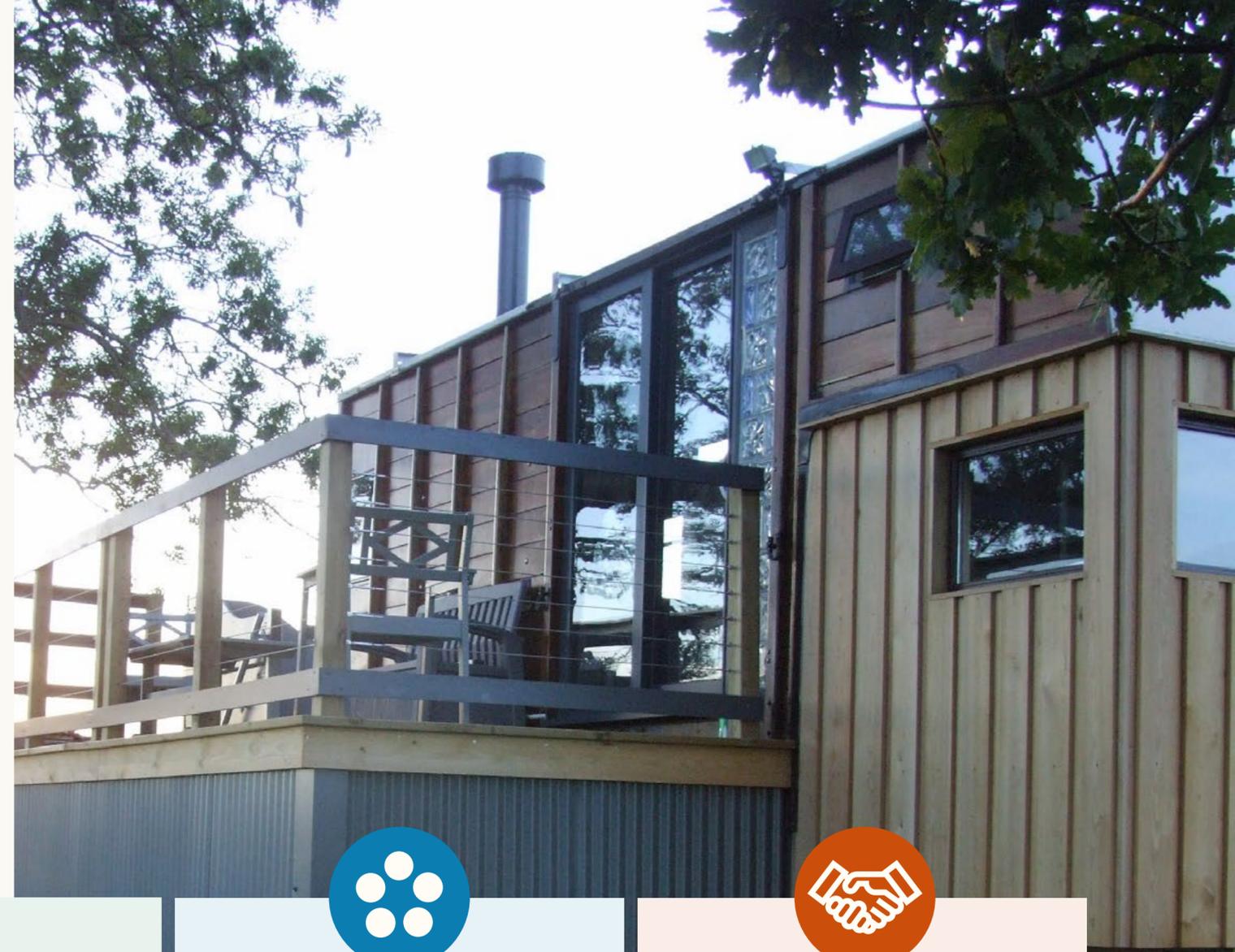


Sustainable Tourist Accommodation Accelerator Programme

To support the implementation of the design guide, we have developed a complementary Sustainable Tourist Accommodation Accelerator Programme to help bring forward a pipeline of development sites and generate interest from operators.

This programme includes free advisory visits to landowners within the National Forest to assess site suitability for sustainable tourist accommodation development. Additionally, landowners receive a further 12 hours of consultancy support to assist with the development of business cases and to enable them to seek pre-application planning advice from the Local Planning Authority.

To date, more than 30 landowners across the National Forest have been supported, some of whom are included as part of the early market engagement exercise.



Objectives

- Broaden the accommodation offer to meet demand.
- Promote design guide principles and influence take-up.
- Facilitating a development pipeline of 'planning ready' sustainable tourist accommodation development sites.



Stages

- Design guide development and launch.
- Landowner engagement.
- Operator engagement.



The golden thread

Prioritising development and partnership opportunities that complement the National Forest's 25-year vision and the sustainability principles outlined in the design guide.

National Forest tourist accommodation trends and opportunities

Analysis conducted by Hotel Solutions and Forward Land, as part of the National Forest Sustainable Tourist Accommodation Accelerator Programme, indicates:

- A shortage of non-serviced tourist accommodation in the National Forest.
- Current occupancy rates across the Forest exceed the national average, indicating strong demand and market stability.
- Pricing trends of accommodation unit rates suggest opportunities for further growth.
- An opportunity exists to create a National Forest Kitemarked certified accommodation offer that defines the true character of the Forest and elevates its profile as a recognised sustainable tourism destination.
- Operator brands in the sector are currently under-represented and would be welcomed to help broaden the range and quality of accommodation, addressing the notable shortage of highly sustainable and accessible options.



Site opportunities

Landowners from across the National Forest have come forward as part of the Sustainable Tourist Accommodation Accelerator Programme to provide development sites for interested parties to consider.

The sites span the entire Forest across parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Staffordshire. They include development sites owned by a range of entities, from aspiring individuals and private landowners to national organisations, including the National Forest Company.

The sites vary in size and features, encompassing large swathes of restored land, working farms with agricultural buildings, and locations near popular visitor attractions. Additionally, many sites feature maturing trees and woodlands, and/or are conveniently situated close to lakes and trails ideal for walking and cycling.



Working with the National Forest

We are actively seeking partnerships with organisations that share our values.

By aligning with us, your business can offer a compelling and highly sought-after guest experience while contributing to our mission of making the National Forest accessible to all and meeting our environmental stewardship goals.

As a charity and non-profit institution within the public sector, sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), we collaborate with various partners to deliver the vision for the National Forest and to create a sustainable destination.

Our current partnerships include organisations such as the Youth Hostel Association and the Camping and Caravanning Club. We aim to develop more of these partnerships and facilitate introductions to other National Forest landowners to create mutually beneficial, long-term partnerships and sustainable income streams. This will help us achieve our vision for the Forest: a landscape whose identity is shaped by trees, enriched by happier and healthier communities and visitors, flourishing wildlife, cleaner air and water, and the growth of more sustainable businesses.



Next steps

We are inviting expressions of interest from organisations that are inspired by our vision, share our values, and would like to hear more about the site opportunities available in the National Forest.

By confirming your interest, you will receive further information and have the opportunity to discuss your ideas with us. Click the link below to arrange an introductory call with our appointed agent, Adam Gough from Forward Land, who will talk you through the opportunities and confirm next steps.

[Click here >](#)





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Thank you

This prospectus has been prepared by Forward Land and Hotel Solutions on behalf of the National Forest Company as part of the National Forest Sustainable Tourist Accommodation Accelerator Programme. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy at the time of printing, the National Forest Company, Forward Land, and Hotel Solutions are not liable for errors, omissions, or subsequent changes.

The inclusion of a site does not imply that the National Forest Company supports the specific proposals. The suitability of the proposed development needs to be considered on its merits by the Local Planning Authority. The National Forest Company's aspiration for more sustainable tourist accommodation across the National Forest should not be read as support for any individual scheme.

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