



THE NATIONAL
FOREST

Appointment of Non-Executive Director National Forest Enterprises Ltd





Welcome to the National Forest

Dear Candidate

We are delighted that you are interested in being considered for the role of Non-Executive Director of National Forest Enterprises Ltd (NFE), a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Forest Company (NFC).

In April 2022, the NFC took ownership of several new assets, including Conkers, the popular family visitor attraction located in the heart of the National Forest in North-West Leicestershire which is operated under contract by a third-party company.

Reporting to the main NFC Board, the NFE Board is responsible for the management of the contract with the third-party company, as well as overseeing the management and development of other commercial assets on behalf of the NFC.

The National Forest is pioneering new ways of working to mitigate and adapt to the urgency of climate change and demonstrate sustainable living in a real place. The last three decades have seen the NFC drive forward the vision for the National Forest, taking it from a leap of faith to the success story we see today. But there is so much more to do.

As the NFC continues to drive the vision forward over the next three decades, Conkers has an important part to play in inspiring existing and future generations of visitors to the National Forest. To help us on this journey, we are looking for a new Non-Executive Director for the NFE Board who will bring knowledge, experience, and commitment as we strive to deliver this ambitious and exciting programme to transform Conkers' visitor experience.

If you share our vision and feel excited by the prospect of transforming Conkers, we would love to hear from you.

Penny Coates

Chair, National Forest Enterprises Ltd

The opportunity



National Forest Enterprises Ltd (NFE) is seeking to appoint a new Non-Executive Director to its Board to strengthen and broaden the collective skills, knowledge, and experience to drive the transformation and development at the heart of the National Forest.

This is a crucial and defining moment in the development of Conkers alongside a wider vision for the heart of the National Forest.

It is an opportunity to help re-define the purpose, visitor experience and ambition of Conkers as it embarks on a major transformation.

It will be essential to secure an individual of the right calibre, experience and outlook to join the NFE Board as it oversees the delivery of our ambitious plans. The role would suit a senior executive in the attractions / leisure / tourism sector looking for a development opportunity, an experienced non-executive director, or an individual pursuing a portfolio career.

The National Forest Company and National Forest Enterprises Ltd rely on the experience and commitment of people of all ages and backgrounds. They operate as inclusive organisations and welcome applications from all.





**We are the
National Forest.**

**We're growing the
future together.
Here. Now.**



About the Forest



The National Forest is one of the country's most ambitious and highly regarded environmental projects, transforming 200 square miles across parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Staffordshire.

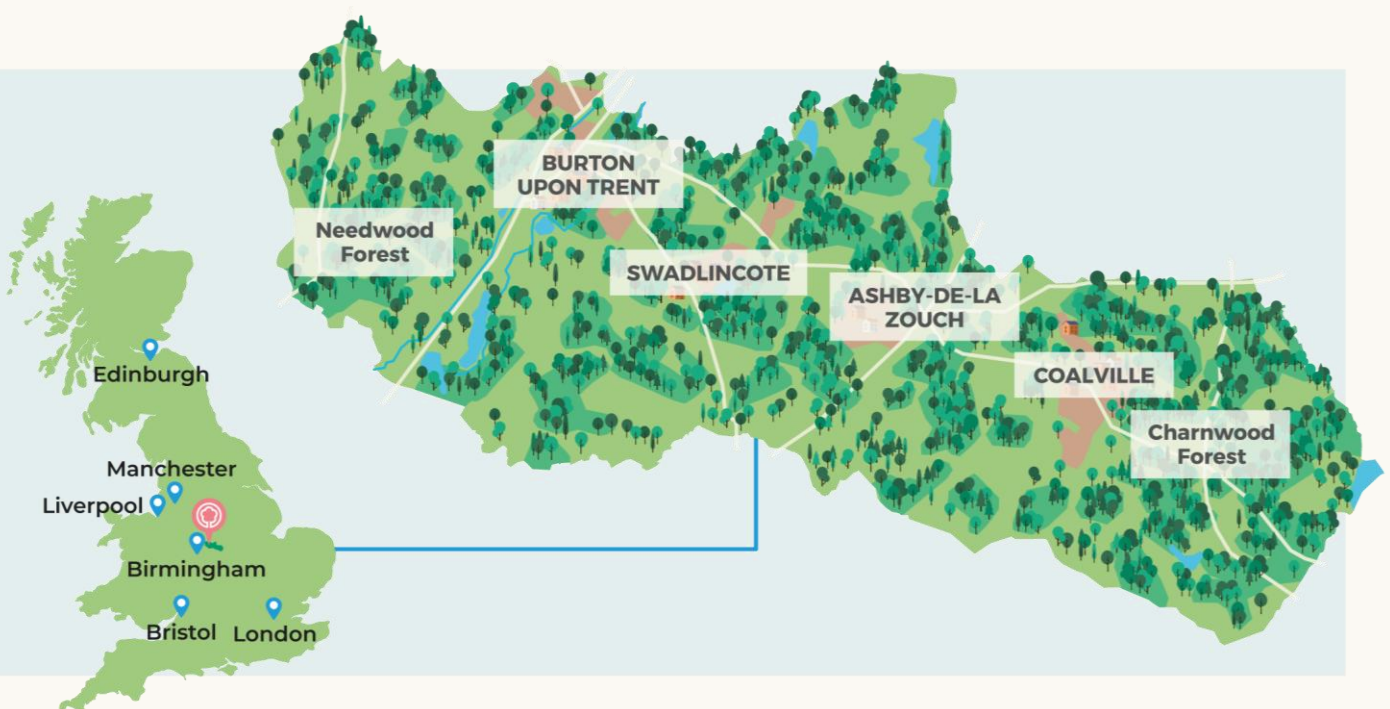
Established by government in the early nineties, it was the first new broadleaved forest to be created in England for over 900 years. As a growing environmental, economic and social asset, the National Forest is enhancing the landscape, growing low carbon businesses and improving the quality of life.

The Forest provides a national demonstration of the value of the natural environment to drive regeneration and showcase policy and practice, research and development in the heart of the country.

The National Forest links the two ancient Forests of Needwood in the west and Charnwood in the east, restoring a landscape scarred by coal mining and heavy industry, providing opportunities for everyone to engage with woodlands near to where they live and work.

This is a dynamic and vibrant area, with some of the oldest rocks in the world and former royal hunting forests set alongside rolling farmland and newly planted woodlands. It is also home to some 220,000 people, supports four main towns with a history of brewing, coal and clay, as well as hosting the National Football Centre at St George's Park.

A lot has been achieved since 1991. More than nine and a half million trees have already been planted, with forest cover increasing from around 6 per cent to more than 25 per cent across the area. Thousands of hectares of land have been converted to woods and other habitats, using a range of grants for farm diversification and urban greening, restoration of former coalfield and mineral sites, and community planting schemes. The result is a dramatic transformation where trees frame the landscape, wildlife is returning, and a woodland culture is emerging.



About the Forest



Social and economic regeneration of the area has been as rapid as the landscape change, with former industrial towns and villages becoming increasingly attractive to residents with accessible natural greenspace on their doorstep.

Major visitor centres, such as Conkers and the National Memorial Arboretum have matured, and new attractions including the Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre and the National Forest Way are providing facilities for residents as well as contributing to a vibrant visitor economy now supporting more than 5,000 jobs.

The National Forest model is held up as an example of best practice, establishing ground-breaking planning policies, demonstrating landscape scale change, pioneering successful grant mechanisms and delivering improvements in biodiversity, economic impact and quality of life.

- Over 8,000 hectares of habitat have been transformed since 1991
- 80% of new forest sites provide access to the public
- 90% of primary schools in the Forest now enjoy regular outdoor learning sessions
- More than 320km of promoted walks provide opportunities for everyone
- Over 8 million visitors enjoy the Forest each year



Hicks Lodge 1990s



Hicks Lodge 2020

What we do



Since 1995, the National Forest Company (NFC) has driven forward the vision for the National Forest. The NFC operates as a small, highly successful organisation that secured charitable status in 2016, whilst also being an Arm's Length Body of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

With around 40 staff, a Chair, an eight strong Board of Trustees and a wide range of delivery partners, the NFC is well placed to steer the National Forest into the future. Our approach is based on collaboration; to support and enable landowners, businesses, public, private and voluntary organisations and communities to deliver. The Company has a dynamic, multifunctional team, a culture of partnership, and an annual turnover of around £6 million.

The NFC works with partners to:

- Lead and champion a shared vision for the Forest
- Enable others through advice, facilitation, demonstration and sharing of best practice
- Invest directly through grant giving, income generation and leveraging other support
- Demonstrate new ways of working through policy, evidence, research and innovation
- Promote success through marketing, advocacy and communications

To find out more about the NFC's work, please visit: nationalforest.org/about



About Conkers



Absorbing the small National Forest Visitor Centre at Waterside, Conkers Discovery Centre opened in 2001 following a £16m investment, and, since opening, it has welcomed over 3 million visitors. It attracts over 200,000 visitors a year, including c25k education visits, and has a year-round programme of special events.

Conkers is mainly an outdoor attraction on a 120-acre woodland site with trails, activities and areas to explore. Indoors there is an interactive exhibition and a 4D cinema, along with cafés, a shop, soft play areas, and event spaces.

When Conkers opened, the ambition was the creation of a forest-themed, environmentally driven adventure in a woodland setting. The ethos of Conkers, especially the content and messages of the interactive exhibition, were ahead of their time, but the understanding of and approach to the environmental and climate crisis then was markedly different from today's perspective.

Overall, society's understanding of the crisis has deepened, and approaches have become more integrated and action orientated. Sustainability is now a key societal value, influencing consumer behaviour, corporate practices, and individual choices. The key differences can be summarised as follows:

- **From Awareness to Urgency:** The late 1990s and early 2000s were about raising awareness, while today is about driving urgent action.
- **From Scepticism to Consensus:** Public and political debates have largely shifted from questioning climate science to discussing solutions.
- **From Niche to Mainstream:** Environmental concerns have moved from the margins to the centre of global discourse, impacting policy, business, culture, and our everyday lives.

The world and society have caught up with and overtaken Conkers. Through the transformed visitor experience, with innovative, immersive delivery methods and technology, we want address this and re-establish Conkers at the forefront of what is happening now and what needs to happen next, especially with the younger generations, and inspire them to play an active part in picking up the pace of action against climate change.



Board biographies



The current National Forest Enterprise Ltd (NFE) Board comprises the following:

Penny Coates (Chair)

Penny is an experienced executive and non-executive director and a Deputy Lieutenant for Leicestershire. She is deputy chair of Chester Zoo and a Trustee of the National Space Centre and of Leicester Cathedral. Penny is also a Non-Executive Director of Aurigo International and an Advisor to the Councils of the West Midlands. Her executive career comprised Mars, PepsiCo, Boots and Asda before joining East Midlands Airport as Managing Director. Her previous non-executive roles include Loughborough University, The Co-operative society, Supply Pilot, Luton Airport and Melton Building Society, as well as chairing the successful East Midlands Freeport bid. She is a Trustee of the National Forest Company and is a member of its Audit & Risk Committee.



John Everitt (Chief Executive, the National Forest Company)

John has worked in the environmental field for more than 30 years and joined as the NFC Chief Executive in January 2015. He was previously Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and a former Director of Conservation for The Wildlife Trusts. He has held senior positions on national and regional forums and is currently Chair of the Forestry Commission's Forestry & Woodland Advisory Committee for the East Midlands, a Fellow of the Royal Society for Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, and was awarded an OBE for services to conservation in 2024.



Richard Hunt (Leicestershire County Council)

Richard has worked as a senior manager for Leicestershire County Council for the past five years. Born and brought up in Leicestershire, he returned to the county to manage country parks and open spaces in 2020, before taking on a wider portfolio, overseeing a large number of the council's commercially traded services. Previously he managed archives, libraries, museums and cultural services in the charity and higher education sectors. He is a trustee of the Midlands Parks Forum.



What we're looking for



The Non-Executive Directors' responsibilities are as expected for a highly professional commercial Board, with key areas including:

- Committing to the ambitious vision, aims and values of National Forest Enterprises Ltd as it works through an exciting period of change.
- Contributing actively to NFE, giving strategic direction, defining goals, and evaluating performance to achieve its aims.
- Ensuring overall governance and compliance for the subsidiary company.
- Ensuring the financial stability of NFE and supporting sustainable income generation.
- Setting an entrepreneurial culture and supporting the executive.
- Developing relationships and networking opportunities to raise awareness.
- Building the positive reputation, credibility and brand of Conkers and the National Forest.



What we're looking for



Qualities required

The National Forest Enterprises Ltd (NFE) is looking to find a Non-Executive Director with the following skills and expertise:

Experience

- Have a clear commitment to and understanding of the vision and values of the National Forest.
- Be well respected within and bring knowledge, skills, and expertise from, a relevant discipline or sector to further the aims and objectives of NFE.
- Have strategic expertise and skills in visitor attraction development and operation.
- Be well networked in the sector, ideally with funding and decision-making bodies.
- Have experience or oversight of major project development and delivery.
- Be independently minded and not afraid to challenge.
- Have sufficient time to undertake the role.
- A team player who wants to work collaboratively and harness the talents of others.

Terms of appointment



Length of appointment and Remuneration

The term is for at least three years, with the possibility of a second term of up to three years.

Time commitment

Board meetings are held quarterly with a moderate amount of pre-meeting reading and preparation required.

Advocacy work, events in the National Forest, and some travel elsewhere will be required, with virtual meetings also used extensively.

Remuneration

This is a 'pro bono' post, and no salary is payable, but travel, training and other expenses reasonably incurred will be paid.

Location

Board meetings are generally held at the National Forest Company's office in Moira, near Swadlincote, South Derbyshire.



How to apply



If you are interested in being considered for the role, please submit the following by email to Sam Hadfield (shadfield@nationalforest.org) with the reference CONFIDENTIAL DIRECTOR in the subject header:

- a comprehensive CV, and
- a supporting statement that addresses the skills and experience needed for this role and outlines your motivation for applying.

Please also include a diversity monitoring form. This is available from our website here: <https://bit.ly/426WiLi>

Equal Opportunities

The NFC is an equal opportunities employer and positively encourages applications from suitably qualified and eligible candidates regardless of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, marital status, or pregnancy and maternity.



How to apply



Appointment process

The recruitment timetable for candidates is provided below.

The new Non-Executive Director will be appointed by a selection panel chaired by the Chair of the National Forest Enterprises Ltd Board, Penny Coates. An indicative recruitment timetable for candidates is provided below.

Once final dates are confirmed, these will be made available to applicants as soon as possible.

- Closing date for applications: **02 May 2025**
- Panel interview, including a visit to the Forest, Conkers tour and informal meetings: **By arrangement**

Further details

If you have any queries about any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information or wish to have an informal and confidential discussion, please contact Commercial Director, Iain Gordon on: igordon@nationalforest.org or 01283 551211.

The National Forest Company will respect the privacy of any initial approach or expression of interest in this role, whether formal or informal.

Further details of the National Forest Company including copies of the Annual Report and Accounts, staff structure and strategy are available on our website:

<https://www.nationalforest.org>



THE NATIONAL
FOREST

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