



**Forest  
of Avon**



# Our Impact

2023 - 2024





# Contents

Welcome to Forest of Avon

Woodland Creation

Woodland Management

Health and Wellbeing sessions

Orchard Management

Volunteers



# Welcome to Forest of Avon

**The Forest of Avon has been transformed over the past 30 years, bringing more trees and woodland to more people every year. Our community forest serves to connect people to trees in every corner of the region.**

The Forest of Avon is one of 15 Community Forests in England, covering Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire, and North Somerset. We engage local communities in enhancing and preserving trees and woodlands, for everyone to enjoy.

With over 30 years of experience in delivering community-led projects, we have created healthy, inspiring, and resilient places where both nature and people can thrive.

Together, we follow the Forest of Avon Plan as a shared strategy for the whole area, ensuring that our actions are focused where they will have the greatest impact - bringing a bigger, better and more connected treescape.

This report outlines the various areas of our work and impact, including tree planting through our Trees for Climate scheme, woodland management, orchard care and our expert-led nature and health activities for people facing barriers to accessing and enjoying their local woodlands.

Many trees have been planted as part of the Forest! With over 1.2 million trees already in the ground, the forest continues to grow every year.

---

## 1.2 million trees planted\*

---

\* Total since 1992 (when the forest started) = 1,215,499 through a combination of Trees for Climate and many other tree-planting projects.

With everyone's involvement, we can expand our trees and woodlands and bring more into good health - serving our communities, reducing flooding, cleaning our water and air, and providing a home and food for wildlife.





# Woodland Creation

**As one of England's Community Forests, we offer one of the country's most competitive tree planting grants.**

Through DEFRA's 'Trees for Climate' scheme, landowners can apply for our flexible and bespoke funding. Our dedicated Tree Team work with landowners, often supporting the project from start to finish, handling planning assessments, design and logistics, and minimising paperwork to speed up the process.

The Forest of Avon encompasses a wide range of tree planting projects, including woodlands, wood pasture, agroforestry, hedgerows and natural regeneration.

In addition to our Trees for Climate team, we have spent the past two years partnering with the three Local Authorities of the West of England to introduce three Tree Technician roles. These roles have been instrumental in supporting various urban projects and collaborating with parish councils in areas beyond cities and towns.

## Trees for Climate\* 2023-24



**68**

Hectares



**46,839**

Trees planted



**1,214**

Hedgerow metres



**43**

Project sites

**“Working with Forest of Avon has been really impactful because we have managed to plant over 200 trees; fruit trees and nut trees growing food for local communities but also establishing important habitats.”**

**Brendan Tate Wistreich**  
Land Manager

Since January 2021, we've planted

**215,499**  
**trees**

**through Trees for Climate\***

\*The above figures do not include planting at Great Avon Wood



# Great Avon Wood 2023-24



## 24

Hectares



## 14,923

Trees planted



## 4,216

Hedgerow  
metres



“And then suddenly out of the blue came Forest of Avon, and they said ‘we can pull the whole thing together’. And it was basically like sprinkling magic dust”

**Stephen Bradshaw**  
Landowner



Case Study: 9.4ha site in Somerset

## Trees for Climate Year 4: Court Farm

The Bradshaw family purchased 38 acres of mixed farm and equestrian land around 15 years ago and began thinking about options for diversifying the land, leading them to contact the Forest of Avon.

This project spans 9.4 hectares and is our largest Trees for Climate project for Year 4 (2023-24), comprising the planting of hedgerows, orchards, woodland, wood pasture and areas of natural colonization, along with wet woodland and wetland areas.

Although there are currently no public access points or footpaths, the landowner envisions involving the local community in the future, particularly local schools.

The landowner, who runs successful independent schools for children with autism, aims to create an educational base to extend their forest school facility. In addition, the site may also be able to provide timber for artisans in the form of willow and hazel coppicing and, eventually, a sustainable timber source.

The project's goals include enhancing wildlife habitats, increasing biodiversity and providing flood defences for Buckland Brook and the Mells river, through additional ditches and ponds.

“This is the second event I’ve done with Joe and he is great, he’s got so much knowledge and is really passionate”.

Woodland management volunteer



# Woodland Management



Since October 2018, we've been running a Woodland Advisory Service on behalf of the Bathscape Partnership Project.

We work with woodland owners across the Bathscape area to provide free, tailored advice and support with managing their woodlands, ensuring the long-term vitality of the woodland ecosystem as a critical part of the unique Bathscape landscape.

**“It was great to be involved in such a lovely project. I learned so much about the local wildlife and really enjoyed helping to improve the woodland for everyone to enjoy”.**

Woodland management volunteer

The Forest of Avon has supported the management of 183 hectares of woodlands since the Bathscape project began in 2018.

In 2023-24, we supported the management of 22 hectares of woodlands and engaged 54 volunteers in maintenance projects at local woodlands including Overscourt Woods, Siston, and the Retreat, Upton Cheyney.

## Local woodlands 2023-24



**22** Hectares



**54** Volunteers

Case Study:

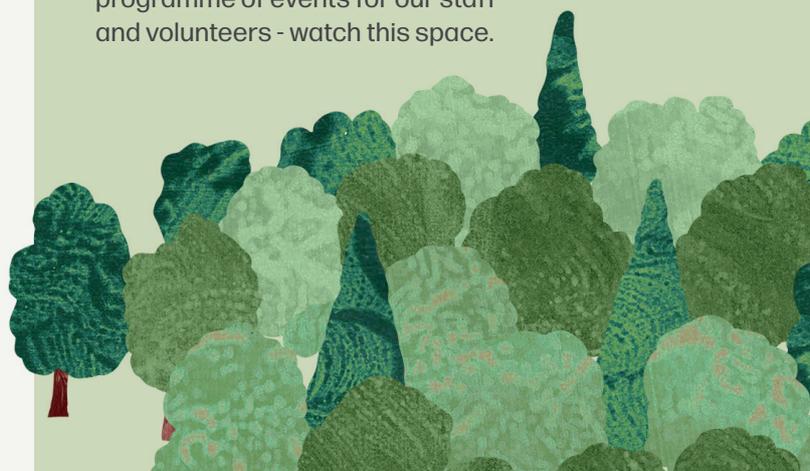
## The Retreat

**The Retreat is a community woodland near Upton Cheyney, leased by the Forest of Avon. Our Woodland Management Officer, Joe, details some of the essential works carried out by the Forest of Avon over the last year.**

In terms of ongoing works carried out across the site, we had the usual annual ride mowing and my regular litter collections and safety works. But more excitingly, we hosted a number of coppice volunteering days, creating 3 more coupes on site to increase the structural diversity and incentivise colonisation by new ground flora species as yet not on site.

On top of this, we thinned the largest compartment on site, finding a seemingly disease-resistant ash that we've haloed and are monitoring for how it fares this summer. And, best of all, we scraped a pond which is now coming out of its second winter - currently looking brilliant with early signs of floral colonisation. We'll see how it copes over the summer if the spring dries up.

This year marks 25 years since the woodland was planted, so I'm cooking up an exciting programme of events for our staff and volunteers - watch this space.



# Health and Wellbeing sessions

We've been running inclusive woodland activities since 2011, designed to directly benefit people with mental and physical health needs, and their supporting carers.

There's strong evidence that nature connection is integral to physical and mental health and our activities have led to measurable improvements in our Group participants' health and wellbeing.

Our groups also enjoy the added benefits of social connections and peer support. They connect with others, find joy in sensory experiences and rediscover the simple pleasures of nature.

**“It's much better for your health being outside. It's not good to be inside and shutting yourself away. It always feels better to be out.”**

Participant of Dementia group

We run groups for people with differing needs, including:

- Dementia groups for people living with dementia and their carers
- Forest Fridays for people with complex mental health needs
- Woodland Wellbeing for people with learning disabilities

Our experienced team of Nature and Health Practitioners, skilled associates, and volunteers bring these programs to life. We are guided by Forest School principles and the NHS's Five Ways to Wellbeing: Be Active, Notice, Connect, Keep Learning, and Give Back

In Bristol we work with Bristol Dementia Wellbeing Service. Our South Gloucestershire group in Yate is supported by Best Life. Forest Friday is supported by Bristol Community Rehabilitation Service which refers into the group. It's commissioned by Second Step/Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust.



90

Number of H&W sessions



150

Number of participants

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a bright green polo shirt and blue jeans, stands in a wooded area. She is holding a small, square, black-framed picture of autumn leaves. She has sunglasses on her head and a necklace with a large, round, brown pendant. The background is filled with green foliage and a large tree trunk.

**“It’s really lovely to hear R laughing. It makes me really happy to hear it... I haven’t seen or heard him laugh like this for a long time.”**

Carer of someone with dementia



# Orchard Management

Orchards for Pollinators is our buzzing initiative, supported by the West of England Combined Authority, to spruce up community orchards in Bristol, Bath and South Gloucestershire.



We're working with schools and communities to give people practical skills to care for their local fruit trees, offering free training sessions in orchards across the region.

With the guidance of our Project Officer, we're bringing our local orchards into good management, recruiting orchard leaders and encouraging new community groups to come together to care for and sustain our orchards.

**“Janine provided clear and exceptional guidance on tree pruning. She is very knowledgeable and has a very warm and inclusive manner.”**

Volunteer

**“Inspiring session, I felt I learned a lot and gained in confidence.”**

Volunteer



**16**

Training sessions



**87**

People trained in orchard skills



**25**

Training delivered at orchard sites



**18**

Orchard Leaders recruited



# Volunteers

## Volunteering

In 2023-24, 357 people volunteered with the Forest of Avon, contributing to our various projects including tree planting, orchard care, woodland management and our health and wellbeing sessions. Collectively, volunteers devoted 1,428 hours to supporting our work.



357

People



1,428

Hours

## Tree planting volunteering

100% of attendees reported that volunteering with us positively impacted their mood. Additionally, all participants felt they received clear instructions and found the volunteering sessions enjoyable.

“All seems perfect. We have time for a break and chat with other people. On the other hand we also done a lot of trees. Nice Day.”

Volunteer



“It was a great day (helped the sun was shining), and I walked away feeling like I had achieved something.”

Volunteer





With thanks to all our partners, funders  
and volunteers who have helped make  
all this possible.



**Forest of Avon**

[info@forestofavontrust.org](mailto:info@forestofavontrust.org) [forestofavon.org](http://forestofavon.org)