



THE  
HEART  
OF  
ENGLAND  
FOREST

# CANDIDATE PACK FINANCE TRUSTEE



# WELCOME

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in joining as our new Finance Trustee at a pivotal point as we take forward our exciting vision for the Heart of England Forest.

We are England's largest new native broadleaf forest, and you will be joining us as we embark upon an ambitious 10-year growth plan that will also see us raise our profile and influence.

The Forest we are planting and protecting here in the heart of the country will not only benefit our local communities, but it will also help to address some of the most pressing social and environmental challenges we face as a nation. There has never been a more important time to take action against climate change and the biodiversity crisis and grow our next generations of future Forest Guardians who will care for the legacy we are creating for decades to come.

As a developing charity, led by our Chief Executive, Andy Parsons, we currently have a staff team of c. 70 who are supported by an army of volunteers comprising passionate and enthusiastic ambassadors for the Forest, and a range of committed and supportive partners spanning the public, private and voluntary sectors.

We are looking for a qualified and experienced finance leader with strong commercial acumen and a good understanding of what constitutes good governance and risk who shares our vision and is passionate about creating a 30,000-acre forest in the heart of England. You will be a collegiate and inclusive leader who can work effectively in partnership with others. A strategic thinker who demonstrates a commitment to the Nolan Principles of Public life, you will ideally have some prior charity finance experience.

We actively encourage candidates from a range of backgrounds who bring the skills to be an effective Trustee and will work closely with our talented and committed staff team.

If you are passionate about creating, restoring and protecting an incredible woodland legacy; a beautiful forest which positively contributes to the landscape and environment and which is an important source of both education and inspiration for young and old alike, we hope you will read on to find out more.

**The Board of Trustees,  
Heart of England Forest**





# INTRODUCTION TO THE HEART OF ENGLAND FOREST

The Heart of England Forest is an exciting and ambitious charity working hard to create a huge new woodland in the heart of the country that will benefit people and wildlife for generations to come. We take our mission very seriously; it has never been more important to invest in our natural environment. Planting trees and creating new woodlands is no longer just a positive ambition for the country, it's essential. It is the simplest solution to help mitigate climate change and create new green spaces that can help reconnect people and communities with nature and the natural environment.

Our goal is to reach 30,000 acres of semi contiguous forest by planting 13 million native broadleaf trees. To date we have planted more than 2 million trees. The significance and scale of our work cannot be underestimated: The Heart of England Forest - already the largest new native forest in the country - will become one of the largest forests in England.

Our mosaic of habitats already spans over 7,000 acres, and includes wetlands, grassland, new woodland, mature and ancient woodland, heathland and farmland. We are home to a wide variety of plants and animals and have one of the largest populations of purple emperor butterfly in the country. Not only are we growing a Forest, we are growing a resource which contributes to sustainable development not just environmentally, but socially and economically, too.

Our habitat connectivity and corridors allow wildlife to flourish, and we recently completed two new wetland development projects which have already improved biodiversity within the Forest.

Volunteers support all the work we undertake, and we are very proud to have been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, recognising the incredible support our volunteers give to the charity.

Our woodland burial site nestled in a tranquil spot beneath our magnificent ancient woodland adds another string to our bow.

However, growing the forest is the easy part; maintaining it in perpetuity for the benefit of people, wildlife and the environment is the challenge. The charity has a significant legacy which has largely been ring fenced for land purchase, which will take us part of the way to achieving our vision. Nurturing and growing this legacy is vital to long term success. This is an exciting time of development for the charity, and with a new CEO at the helm this will enable us to increase our already inspiring vision and deliver one of the most significant resources for climate change mitigation in the country.

If you are inspired by our vision and our energy and would like to join us in creating an incredible breath of fresh air for the nation, we would love to hear from you.

You can also find out more about the charity on our website at <https://heartofenglandforest.org> and in our most recent annual report, which can be found [here](#).





# OUR VISION AND PURPOSE

Planting tomorrow's great native woodland. The charity's vision is to create 30,000 acres of contiguous forest in the heart of England to benefit the environment, wildlife and people for hundreds of years to come. The mosaic of habitats we are creating will help mitigate climate change, enable wildlife to thrive, and provide a haven for people to visit which benefits their health, happiness and wellbeing.

# OUR RENEWED STRATEGY

As an ambitious charity, we recognise that trees are just the start. Woodland planting creates far greater opportunities than merely growing England's largest new native forest.

We are currently working on a new 3-year business plan for 2025-2028 which will help support the charity's vision with all areas of the organisation collaborating to produce the plan.

Later in the year, the Board of Trustees will work with the leadership team to renew our longer-term strategic ambition, to ensure that we continue to make significant impact to our natural environment whilst transitioning into an environmental charity of regional and national significance.



# SOME OF OUR MOST RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS'

## TREES CALL TO ACTION PROJECT

A £499,446 grant from the Trees Call to Action Fund is enabling the charity to work together with the District Councils of Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick, and Wychavon, on a three-year project to support and deliver tree planting across our local landscape and community spaces.

## GREEN RECOVERY

A £1.7 million Defra Green Recovery Challenge Fund grant secured by the Heart of England Forest is enabling a ground-breaking project which will support green recovery in the region, bringing environmental, social and economic benefits.

## VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

11,144 volunteer hours were given, the equivalent of more than five full time members of staff. We were immensely proud to be awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, which recognises outstanding work by volunteers to benefit their communities.

## POLLINATOR PATHWAYS

As part of our five-year partnership with Severn Trent, we have started to create 30-metre wide 'pollinator pathways' covering 168 acres within the 2,471 acres of woodland in the Sernal area of the Forest.

## FOREST GUARDIANS

A £240,700 grant from the government's second round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund will support the 'Growing Future Forest Guardians' project at our new 62-acre site near Redditch.



# EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

The Heart of England Forest is committed to improving EDI as one of our core priorities.

Whilst we are mindful that we cannot achieve everything overnight, and meaningful work on this area takes time and thought, we have made several commitments.

The Heart of England Forest Board of trustees has adopted the Charity Governance Code, and committed to EDI as one of its two priority areas of work this year, providing leadership to the charity. This has included Board training, and a commitment to engage external expertise to support the charity to develop an effective EDI strategy, linking directly to the charity's mission and objectives.

All Senior Managers have undertaken a series of training to enable us to lead and model a positive and inclusive culture. We are rolling out this training to all staff over the course of the year.

We have commenced strategy planning for our key areas of work, looking at how we can focus on improving EDI and making the work of our charity more appealing and accessible to a wider range of audiences.

We have already produced action plans within the areas of communications, fundraising, HR, volunteering and commercial development, with further work planned to widen this scope across the remainder of the charity's work during the year.

Other actions we have taken to improve EDI across the charity include an all-access trail and car parking facility within the Forest, to allow better access to the natural world for people with limited mobility, parents and carers with prams, wheelchair users, etc.

We have opened our first accessible holiday cottage, allowing people with limited mobility to stay in the Forest, and we are considering accessibility and EDI in the design of all new building projects. We are a Living Wage Foundation accredited employer, meaning that all of our staff and contractors are paid at least the Real Living Wage.

We feel that it is important to offer a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and want to ensure that finance and background are not barriers to coming to work for us. Our initial actions have helped us to start on the journey and have open and honest conversations about the subject of diversity and inclusion. We have much work still to do and look forward to working with others to learn and progress.





# FINANCE TRUSTEE ROLE DESCRIPTION

As Trustee and Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee, this role combines leadership in financial oversight and strategic advice to the Board, contributing to the overall strategic decision making and governance of the Heart of England Forest.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

### FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

- Provide leadership to the Finance & Audit Committee.
- Guide the Committee in overseeing the charity's financial health and strategy, ensuring its decisions align with the Board's objectives.
- Chair and facilitate Finance & Audit Committee meetings, ensuring they are well-planned, productive, and result in clear, actionable outcomes.
- Ensure that decisions taken at Finance & Audit Committee meetings are implemented effectively.
- Provide regular updates to the Board of Trustees on the work and recommendations of the Finance & Audit Committee.
- Work closely with the Executives and key staff to:
  - Plan the annual cycle of Finance & Audit Committee meetings
  - Set clear, strategic agendas for each meeting
  - Ensure meetings are well-organised and accurately recorded

### FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND PLANNING

- Work in partnership with relevant staff and Trustees to review and monitor the charity's financial and investment strategy, ensuring it supports the organisation's long-term sustainability.
- Collaborate with key staff to ensure that robust financial planning processes are in place, including budgets, forecasts, and financial controls.
- Ensure that Trustees are fully informed of their financial responsibilities and help interpret and explain financial data in a way that is clear and accessible to those without financial expertise





## GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

- Act as a full member of the Board, contributing to overall governance and strategic decision-making.
- Lead the Finance & Audit committee in providing financial oversight and risk assurance to the Board.
- Sit on the Investment Committee to help ensure financial and investment strategic alignment for the charity.

## EACH TRUSTEE IS EXPECTED TO

- Use his/her specific skills, knowledge, experience, and perspectives to help the Board reach sound decisions;
- Contribute actively to the Board's role in giving strategic direction to the Heart of England Forest, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed objectives and targets;
- Scrutinise Board papers;
- Take an active part in discussions;
- Focus on and analyse relevant issues;
- Act in the best interest of the Heart of England Forest;
- Lead by example and actively support the raising of funds for the charity; Comply with the policies of the Heart of England Forest, including the policy on conflicts of interest and the Trustee Code of Conduct
- Devote the necessary time and effort to fulfil his/her role as trustee.





# PERSON SPECIFICATION

## KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

- Qualified accountant (ICAEW, ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA).
- Significant experience of senior financial leadership and developing and delivering financial strategies at a strategic level.
- Experience of governance, financial control, investment planning and budgeting.
- Strong commercial awareness with experience in handling complex financial information and providing financial analysis.
- Demonstrable risk management and assurance expertise with the ability to make sound judgement of organisational wide risks.

## SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

- A strong commitment to the Heart of England Forest, our vision, mission and values.
- Excellent communication skills to clearly communicate complex financial matters to non-financial stakeholders.
- An inclusive approach, ensuring all views are taken into account and that consensus and clarity of outcomes are achieved.
- A high level of integrity, impartiality, and the ability to exercise independent judgement and respect confidences.
- Strong inter-personal skills and abilities in an ambassadorial role.
- Tact and diplomacy, with the ability to listen actively and engage effectively.
- Ability to foster and promote a collaborative team environment.



# TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

## REMUNERATION

Trustee positions are voluntary and unpaid. However, all reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

## LOCATION

Face to face Board meetings are held four times a year in the Heart of England Forest. These are currently held on Fridays during the day, but with potential to change to accommodate working patterns. etc. - 4 hours plus lunch networking, plus site visit or further topic discussion.

Other meetings are a mixture of in-person and virtual, and video conferencing technology is available to support hybrid meetings. Trustees may sometimes be called upon to attend the Heart of England Forest events, or represent the charity at national events, dependent upon availability and skillset.

## TIME COMMITMENT

Four Board meetings per year in the Heart of England Forest, plus at least four Finance and Audit committee meetings, and four Investment Committee meetings online plus associated discussions, reviews in liaison with the Chief Finance & Operating Officer.

# HOW TO APPLY

We hope you will consider making an application. If you have questions about the appointment and would find it helpful to have an informal conversation, please contact Rebecca O'Connor [rebecca.oconnor@starfishsearch.com](mailto:rebecca.oconnor@starfishsearch.com) and we will be happy to arrange a call.

To make an application, please go to <https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/hef-fin-tru/> and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:

- Your CV (no more than three sides).
- A supporting statement (no more than two sides) that sets out why you think this role is the right move for you and how you meet the knowledge and experience criteria.

We would also be grateful if you would also complete the Equality and Diversity monitoring form on the online application process. This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

**Closing date:** Friday 20th June 2025

**Preliminary interviews with Starfish online:** w/c 30th June 2025

**Final Panel interviews with Heart of England Forest:** w/c 14th July 2025