

Chairman's Report for the Financial Year 2011-12

The Financial Year 2011/12 was a successful one for the Trust with aims outlined in last year's report being either completed by the year end or well underway.

It has been a good year for Tree Planting within the Forest of Marston Vale with over 23 acres of Community Woodland have been planted at Folly Wood Lidlington and Octagon Wood Willington.

Folly Wood tree planting was achieved through a total of 9 events including public, corporate and a Forest Volunteer planting event involving 875 people planting 9,800 trees out of a total of 16,700. The public event in Dec 2011 attracted around 350 people with sponsorship from GE Transportation and Network Rail.

Octagon Wood the final phase was completed in early 2012 in partnership with Bedford Borough, on their land. Planting involved over 9,000 trees/shrubs through 2 corporate events, a public event and a planting event with Willington Lower School. Financial contributions were received from Ricoh, GE Transportation and Network Rail.

The Millennium Country Park achieved the Green Flag award for the 5th consecutive year. In addition the ISO 14001 standard Environmental Management System for the Forest Centre and Millennium Country Park were retained. Thus demonstrating continued best practice within environmental management.

Despite continuing difficult economic conditions and unseasonal weather at times the commercial activities of the Trust's trading subsidiaries returned significant profits to the Trust. This can be attributed to the hard work and imagination of the Forest and catering teams in continuing to deliver excellent events, activities, products and services.

The Trust wishes to record its sincere thanks for the hard work and dedication of the 100 or so **Volunteers** who gave over **8,000** hours of their time throughout the course of the year. Without whose support many of the activities undertaken here at the Forest Centre, Millennium Country Park and our other Community Woodlands wouldn't have been as successful. The Trust would not be as successful without this dedicated group of volunteers with their multitude of interests and skills.

Woodworks the festival weekend was affected by the weather on the Sunday affecting numbers and meant the event broke even with a total of 2,500 visitors over the 2 days.

The Forest Centre had in excess of 160,000 visits throughout the year. With the café and bike hire performing better than budget and with cost savings resulted in a net profit for Marston Vale Services and a donation of **£58,807** to Marston Vale Trust.

Community engagement continued to go from strength to strength. Both the Friends of the Forest scheme and Corporate Friends of the Forest scheme were re-launched with new branding and literature, kindly sponsored by NFU Mutual. New Corporate Friends in 2011/12 were Spectrum Recruitment, Bedford Audi, Vindis and DHL in partnership with Sainsbury's.

An "Awards for All" lottery grant was successfully secured to allow major re-design of the Forest of Marston Vale website and a replacement "Forest" leaflet. With the purpose of increasing awareness, understanding and community engagement. Through our tri-annual "Commentree" newsletters and advertising wraps on the Beds on Sunday, the Trust was able to reach supporters and visitors with information and news from the Forest of Marston Vale.

During the year the charity received from its wholly owned trading subsidiaries, Marston Vale Services Limited and Marston Vale Farms Limited, via covenant **£58,807 and £173,257** respectively (2011: £58,811 and £48,553). As a result of this year's activities, the charity's unrestricted General Fund has decreased slightly from £983,727 to **£980,692**. However we should note that of this figure, **£280,237** is represented by fixed assets and **£700,455** by net current assets, which is equivalent to in excess of 24 months of the Forest Team costs in accordance with the charity's reserve policy.

Finally I would like to take time to pay tribute to three people who passed away during this year all of whom will be sadly missed by everyone who knew them.

Paula [Krasniqi] was a key member of the catering team and had worked here at the centre for over 5 years, and although quite ill at the time succeeded in her wish to get married this summer here at the Forest Centre. She will be remembered for her determination and in the continuing Pink Ladies Night which she initiated and which continues to raise funds for cancer research.

Don [Morris] was a volunteer who had been involved with the Millennium Country Park for around 10 years and was a very keen naturalist and photographer. His patience and skill meant he was often rewarded with outstanding photographs, which are and will continue to be used by us in our work and is a fitting tribute to him and his skill.

Mark [Howe] was a longstanding trustee and supporter of the Trust; his understanding of the countryside and business like approach as a local landowner will be sadly missed by us all on the trustee board.

Report delivered by the Chairman

Debbie Hassall

Marston Vale Trust Annual General Meeting
29th November 2012