

Chairman's Report for the Financial Year 2013/14

2013/14 was a successful year for the Trust,

Despite continuing difficult economic conditions and the particularly wet winter, the commercial activities of the Trust's trading subsidiaries returned significant profits to the Trust,

A tribute to the hard work and imagination of the Trust's combined team in continuing to deliver excellent events, activities, products and services to the general public.

12,000 trees being planted on Plunders Hill & a further 7,000 being planted via a series of events involving 1,000 people including local schools, brownies groups, corporate groups, forest volunteers & the general public

1,250m of forest track installed at Tartlett's Close & Rectory Wood

Interpretation boards for the ridge & furrow archaeology at Wiles Wood & The Kill

A number of geocaches were installed at various forest sites

English Elm project saw the last of 160 young trees planted across the portfolio of forest sites by the forest volunteers. With an information board at each site explaining the project. These trees will be monitored for health & vigour during their establishment, data being fed back to the Great British Elm Experiment.

Woodland Carbon Code.

Validation for forest woodlands has been completed as part of a Forestry Commission Pilot Programme. [The Trust now has in the region of 55,000 tonnes of carbon to trade as the voluntary carbon offset market develops in the UK over the coming years.]

Grange Estate

Led 12 BRVP/Forest Volunteer conservation & site maintenance tasks at the Grange Estate totalling 285 person hours;

Negotiated 2 licences at the Grange Estate one of which has enabled a local Forest of Marston Vale (FoMV) volunteer to manage an area of woodland for the keeping of bees and general woodland management activities. The second licence is with a commercial leisure company that also has a social operation whereby they help children & young adults to experience wild camping and river based leisure activities.

The DEFRA funded Paths for Communities project was completed & delivered a range of access & interpretation mediums to help promote the Forest Centre as an access hub for the Marston Vale. The grant from DEFRA enabled the Trust to deliver 3 large map boards, 10 leaflets, 2 listening posts, new bridleway access and 2 geocache trails;

Millennium Country Park

Wetland Nature Reserve improvement project was completed in autumn 2013. A new fully accessible bird hide, artificial sand martin nesting bank & around 1800m² of potential feeding habitat for waders were created.

The Forest Centre and Millennium Country Park achieved a 7th consecutive Green Flag, & came 8th in the UK's Green Flag People's Choice award

25 local school, Cub scout and Brownie group came for ranger led & self led visits to the Park. Bringing over 500 children to the Park in organised visits.

1276 visits by children to the 15 organised children's holiday events, supported by help from volunteers.

ISO14001 was retained for the 5th year after demonstrating good environmental management throughout the organisation & the completion of a variety of objectives which include reducing water consumption, reduced reliance on fossil fuels & tree planting.

The Forest Centre

Sales achieved in the catering department, covering the café bar, conference and event catering, totalled £459,355 **an increase of 13.39% from the previous financial year**, and over budget by 1.3%

Conference Room Hire achieved sales of £118,360 **an increase of 61.2% against the previous year** and up against budget by 39.2%. Delegate numbers showed an increase of 35.4% against the previous year.

The Gift Shop achieved revenue of £35,753 **an increase of 16.4% against last year's sales** and up against budget by 5.2%

Total visitors to the Forest Centre including conference visitors were recorded at **210,266 an increase of 31.2%**.

Events

Our first classical concert Sunset Symphonia (July 2013) was a great success which brought in 220 people attending (the maximum seated capacity).

Our second annual Christmas Tree Festival recorded over 2,500 visitors over the two days.

Community Engagement

Commentree – the Forest's 'what's on' guide. Four editions of a new format publication in print produced. 10,000 copies of each printed & distributed to tourist information centres & libraries

Commentree Extra – email based html publication. Seven editions, each sent to an average of 1600 registered email addresses

During the year the charity and its wholly owned trading subsidiaries, Marston Vale Services trading as The Forest Centre Limited and Marston Vale Farms Limited, donated via covenant £104,605 and £177,885 respectively (2013: £68,254 and £163,900).

As a result of this year's activities, the charity's unrestricted General Fund has increased to £1,089,208. However it should be noted that of this figure, £345,505 is represented by fixed assets and £743,703 by net current assets, which is equivalent to in excess of 12 months of the Forest Team costs in accordance with the charity's reserve policy.

In all the activities, events, projects & day to day workings of the Forest there is one extremely important element that runs throughout the organisation & that is the dedication & professionalism of the staff & volunteers who make all these things happen. Without those who put in all the extra effort this organisation would not be the success it is today. During this last financial year the volunteers donated 9,680 hours of their time to the Trust, which is equivalent to 5 full time members of staff, in a wide ranging number of areas. Once again the Trust would like to record its sincere thanks for their continued hard work & dedication.

Report delivered by the Chairman

Debbie Hassall

Marston Vale Trust Annual General Meeting
19th November 2014