

Dalby Forest Project

Boosting sustainable tourism in Yorkshire



Dalby Forest lies on the southern slopes of the North York Moors National Park, and is a popular visitor attraction and important habitat for wildlife. A £4.3 million investment has resulted in its remarkable transformation. With an attractively refurbished courtyard, a sustainably constructed Visitor Centre, and a vast network of cycle trails, Dalby Forest is proving to be a valuable asset in the region, giving the local economy a much needed boost by drawing in tourists from far and wide.

objectives

- To attract more visitors to the area throughout the year by providing a mix of facilities and activities
- To extend the length of time visitors spend at the site
- To increase tourism spend in the local economy
- To contribute to a wider understanding of the economic, environmental and social value of forestry
- To provide the forest with a visitor centre built to a high specification using environmentally sustainable building techniques, and to showcase sustainability in building construction and operation

actions and achievements

- **Phase 1: Dalby Courtyard**
£1.1m refurbishment of the old Forestry Commission offices, estate yard and village hall at Low Dalby. Provision of six craft workshops and five offices to rent, a new community resource centre, a permanent home for the cycle hire, cycle wash facility, a new cafe, new improved toilets, extension to existing car park, alterations to the forest drive and a safe pedestrian path to the courtyard complex.
- **Phase 2: Visitor Centre**
The installation of a £2.6m Visitor Centre incorporating environmental and sustainable features in its construction – a wind turbine, solar panels, rainwater harvesting system, woodfuel boiler, and a counter made from recycled mobile phones, yoghurt pots and wellies. The new centre has won the the prestigious Prime Minister’s Better Public Building Award in recognition of its architectural and environmental excellence and the Sustainability Award of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Pro-Yorkshire Awards.
- **Phase 3: Cycle Trails**
A £405,000 project to build 55 kilometres of new cycle trails promoting Dalby as a centre of excellence for mountain biking in England. A cycle skills area has been constructed at Dixon’s Hollow with assistance from PACE Mountain Bikes and Singletraction.
- Increase in tourism and boost to local economy. Visitor numbers increased from 300,000 to 400,000 per annum.
- 20 jobs created and 70 volunteers deployed annually on the project.

context and continuity

Dalby Forest is situated on the southern slopes of the North York Moors National Park. A network of forest roads including the nine-mile Dalby Forest Drive provides access to an outstanding 'Rigg and Dale' landscape - valleys, upland, streams and a mix of broadleaf and pine forest. Dalby Forest is one of the most visited outdoor attractions in Yorkshire. Following the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001 visitor numbers stabilised at approximately 300,000 visitors a year. Without major investment in the forest, there was a risk of the facilities becoming tired and worn, with an inevitable drop in visitor numbers as a consequence.

Strategic documents including the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and the Sub Regional Investment Plan (SRIP), outlined economic development as a high priority for Yorkshire and the Humber. In focusing on the distinct character of Dalby forest, and the special qualities of the National Park, the Forestry Commission and partners saw an opportunity to support economic regeneration, by enhancing the natural environment. Adding to the existing tourism product would attract high growth and high spend markets to the area, offering new business and employment opportunities both on site and in the nearby market towns and villages. The project has improved the recreation facilities in the forest and created a Regional Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Economic Development.

The project has stimulated partnerships with the private sector - mountain bike hire and café; a computer business; various crafts and arts businesses and a new restaurant – ensuring the long term, sustainable use of the forest with partner organisations.

quotes

'The fantastic new Dalby Visitor Centre will have a strong and positive impact on the development of a genuinely sustainable approach to tourism in North Yorkshire. The regeneration at Dalby will offer new businesses and employment opportunities both on site and in nearby market towns and villages.'

Don Stewart, Executive Director of Strategy of Yorkshire Forward

'Excellent bike course, especially for intermediate riders. It helps to practice virtually every Free Riding skill needed, in one giant course. A lot of time and money has been spent on this project, and it shows, a truly professional job all round. This has got to be a must visit for anyone!' A visitor

partners

Forestry Commission
North York Moors
National Park
Authority
Ryedale District Council

funding

Total	£4.3 million
ERDF Objective 2	£1.2m
Forestry Commission	£1.55m
North York Moors	
National Park Authority	£25,000
Ryedale District Council	£55,000
Yorkshire Forward	£1.45m
Yorventure	£20,000

lessons learnt

- Setting up contracts with an experienced project management company to oversee the construction of the new building made a big difference in phase 2. Phase 1 was done without specific construction project manager and went over budget.
- Completing the construction and finishing the snagging list has been a very long process on such an extensive project.