

## CLOtC accredited forests for self-led learning visits

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom ([CLOtC](#)) is the national voice for learning outside the classroom. The Forestry Commission is proud to be working with the CLOtC to create and improve opportunities for self-led learning on the public forest estate.

We are working towards [CLOtC Site Provider Awards](#) for Forestry Commission sites across England. This award recognises organisations which actively welcome schools onto their site/s for self-led visits and ensure that the sites and any other services provided meet the needs of schools.

## CLOtC accredited site: Cardinham Woods, near Bodmin, Cornwall

Cardinham Woods is one of Cornwall's hidden gems – approached along narrow lanes (but accessible for coaches!), a visit provides a real forest adventure. Mixed woodland and open spaces, woodland wildlife and an intriguing history, make this a fantastic destination for a school visit for any age group. One of the most attractive features of the site is the water – streams that can be crossed, bridged, dammed, or explored for freshwater plants and animals – provide all sorts of learning opportunities.

Cardinham Woods is part of the public forest estate, which is made up of more than 1500 woods and forests in England that are cared for by the Forestry Commission. We practise multi-purpose sustainable forestry: multi-purpose means that our forests are managed, not just to supply timber, but also as valuable wildlife habitats and places for visitors to enjoy; sustainable means that we follow long term forest design plans, so that the public forest estate continues to provide timber, and benefits for people and wildlife into the future.

### Example school visits

- **EYFS** – Understanding the world – exploring different habitats to look for minibeasts, discussing where they live and why – compare what you find in the forest and in the streams
- **Primary school** – Design technology – using sticks and other forest materials to build temporary structures in and around one of the streams – dams, bridges, stepping stones (note – all such structures must be dismantled at the end of each session)
- **Secondary school** – Year 7 settling in, getting to know each other – working in teams to follow a map of one of the trails, completing various challenges on the way – crossing a stream, building a shelter, identifying trees etc
- **GCSE / A-level** – Geography fieldwork – human impact on the environment; conflicts in land use – balancing needs of forest for timber, people and wildlife, while conserving the ancient monuments; OR a study based on the long term research project to conserve dormouse, which is being carried out on site

### Site [webpage](#)

- has information about trails, site facilities, opening times, parking charges, directions and events

### On-site facilities

- Award-winning café, play area, ample parking for cars and coaches (charges apply), toilets, BBQs, picnic tables, cycle hire
- The mobile phone signal is variable

### Surrounding woodland

- Although the area around the café and play area gets very busy in the summer months, especially at weekends, it is easy to access mixed woodland and beautiful stream-side trails within a few minutes walk.
- There are waymarked trails, which start at the car park, including the easy-going Lady Vale Walk which follows the river, and others which include steep sections and stunning viewpoints

### Self-led learning opportunities

- Woodland activities – trees, minibests, habitats, shelterbuilding (see FC [downloads](#) and [lesson plans](#))
- Active / sporting – cycling, walking, mapreading

### Learning opportunities from partner organisations

- Our partner learning provider 'Badger Forest School', offers regular activities for schools and other groups at Cardinham; [email](#) or visit the [website](#)

### Local Forestry Commission contacts

- The local FC office is in Bodmin, but staff are field based so to contact them, please email the [ranger](#)
- The West England District FC learning team is based at Wyre Forest, Worcestershire – [email](#) or telephone 0300 067 4855

## Planning your visit

- **Contact the Forestry Commission [ranger for Cardinham](#)** – we'd like to know you are coming and, depending on your plans, there may be a booking form to complete
- **Pre-visit** – we strongly recommend that you make a pre-visit to the site before bringing your group – you'll need to know where to park, where the toilets are, where and how you will carry out your activities; you'll need to be able to write your risk assessment and will also be able to pick up free trail leaflets and maps
- **Health and safety** – we carry out regular safety checks of the area around the forest centre and of the waymarked trails; we do not however, check every path and every part of the forest; if you are bringing a group to the forest, it is your responsibility to carry out a pre-visit and write your own risk assessment; we cannot provide you with a site risk assessment because the forest is a variable environment, which changes as a result of weather conditions, time of year, forest operations etc; we do offer a [sample risk assessment](#), which may be of use, when you are writing your own and a [guide to group leader responsibilities](#); if a member of your group has an accident while visiting Cardinham, please let the ranger know as soon as possible.

## Accessibility

- The car park is relatively flat, with dedicated parking and toilets for disabled visitors. Some of the trails into the woods are quite steep, but there are more easily accessible options – for example, the Lady Vale trail, which is surfaced and has only a minor gradient – please ask for advice if needed
- Café is at ground floor level with no steps
- Information about accessibility of trails is available in leaflets
- With prior notice and for genuine access for less physically able learners, it may be possible to provide vehicular access to some areas of the forest

## After your visit

- **Feedback** – we'd like to know how you get on with your self-led visit to Cardinham and have provided a short [online survey](#)
- **Further opportunities** – if you would like to find out more about learning opportunities on the public forest estate, please [email](#) and ask to be put onto our mailing list