

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: High Lodge, Thetford Forest, Suffolk

High Lodge is situated in the heart of Thetford Forest near Brandon, and is one of the Forestry Commission's flagship recreational sites in East England. High Lodge attracts approximately 400,000 visitors per annum, mostly family groups seeking adventurous activities through cycling and play. During the summer months, the site can be busy, but trails leading into the surrounding woodland allow you to leave the hustle and bustle behind within a few minutes walk.

High Lodge offers a fantastic variety of days out for visiting school groups of all ages – with mixed woodland habitats and wildlife, as well as fantastic play areas, sculptures, orienteering, walking and cycling trails, seasonal attractions and events.

Thetford Forest 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 forest habitats along the nature trail for evidence of forest birds and animals, discussing where they live and why, and visiting the wildlife hide; OR Physical development – use any of the adventure play areas and play trails or the 'Follow that Sound' trail to be active and interactive, and to develop co-ordination, control and movement.
- **Primary school** – Art / Design – be inspired by the play sculptures to create natural art of your own, or design and build your own play equipment from natural materials
- **Secondary school** – Year 7 settling in, getting to know each other – work in teams to complete the orienteering course or make use of the onsite activities – hire bikes or have a go at archery or pony trekking (seasonal).
- **GCSE / A-level** – Geography fieldwork – investigate human impacts on the environment; conflicts in land use and woodland management (balancing the needs of the forest for timber, people and wildlife)

Site webpage

- Directions to High Lodge, together with detailed information about trails, site facilities, opening times and charges, and events can be found on our [website](#), or our [Facebook](#) page

On-site facilities

- Café, shop, play areas, ample parking for cars and coaches (site entry charges apply), toilets, BBQs for hire, picnic tables, cycle hire, forest drive, visitor centre, Oak Lodge function room
- Seasonal attractions of archery, pony trekking, climbing walls, bushcraft and events
- New for 2015 – High Lodge Thetford Forest will be hosting the HLF funded 'Wings Over the Brecks' Project; there will be an interactive learning trail, information boards and volunteers to talk you through live video footage from bird nest cameras

Surrounding woodland

- High Lodge is situated right in the middle of the forest – within five minutes walk is a variety of mixed woodland – different species and ages of trees and open spaces.
- There are several way-marked trails from the site, including a nature trail and short easy access route, as well as longer trails for walkers, runners and cyclists.

Self-led learning opportunities

- Woodland activities – trees, minibeasts, habitats, shelter building (see FC [downloads](#) and [lesson plans](#))
- Active / sporting – cycling, orienteering, walking, running, and seasonally – archery, pony trekking, climbing walls
- Coming soon...Magic of the Brecks: an interactive self-led activity based on the new Wings over the Brecks Trail – Contact the local FC team for more details
- Hire a 'Ranger in a Bag' at High Lodge
 - Ranger in a Bag (RIAB) is the Forestry Commission's bookable self-led activity pack for school groups
 - RIAB contains all the equipment and instructions needed to lead learning activities in the forest (no experience necessary!), as well as introductory and plenary activities
 - RIAB is suitable for a group of up to 35 children aged 4-11
 - RIAB topics available at High Lodge are Amazing Animals and Shelterbuilding
 - For more information, please contact the local FC team

Learning opportunities from partner organisations

- Lookout Archery
- Breck Trecks Pony Rides
- Battlefield Live
- Highline Adventure
- Back to Wilderness

Visit our [website](#) for more details of the activities offered to school groups by these organisations.

Local Forestry Commission contacts

- The local FC team is based at High Lodge, Thetford Forest and is available Monday to Friday 10am-4pm for enquiries from school groups. Please [email](#) or telephone 0300 067 4400.

Planning your visit

- **Contact the local FC team** – 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 purchase trail leaflets and maps from the Information Point on site.
- **Health and safety** – we carry out regular safety checks of the area around High Lodge 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 High Lodge, please let a member of FC site staff know as soon as possible

Accessibility

- The site and car park are relatively flat, with dedicated parking and toilets for disabled visitors; the trails into the woods are of variable surfaces
- Accessible toilets are available and clearly marked
- Disabled parking spaces are provided and clearly marked, with flat surfaces leading to the site facilities
- The café and shop are at ground floor level with ramps for access
- Oak Lodge, which is bookable for school groups has its own dedicated parking and ramp access
- Information about accessibility of trails is available from the web site at www.forestry.gov.uk/highlodge or the Information Point
- There is a range of speciality bikes available for hire from the bike shop (Bike Art) to allow access to the wider forest; for more information on these, please contact [Bike Art](#) on 01842 810090
- Cycle trails are graded green (easy) through to black (more challenging)

After your visit

- **Feedback** – we'd like to know how you get on with your self-led visit to High Lodge 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