

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: Rendlesham Forest, near Woodbridge, Suffolk

Rendlesham Forest, near the Suffolk coast, is a brilliant place to take school groups – you can explore the forest, discover the wildlife, play on the play equipment and even find out about the UK's most significant alleged UFO sighting!

Rendlesham 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.

Rendlesham attracts about 30,000 visitors per year. In the summer months, the site itself can be busy, but trails leading into the surrounding woodland allow you to leave the hustle and bustle behind within a few minutes walk.

Example school visits

- **EYFS** – Physical development – visit the 'Out of this World' play trail, which provides children with opportunities to be active and interactive, and to develop co-ordination, control and movement
- **Primary school** – Design Technology – discuss and look for animal homes – what makes a good home and why; then work in groups to plan, design and build shelters from natural materials
- **Secondary school** – Year 7 settling in, getting to know each other – working in teams to follow a map of the UFO Trail, with discussion questions about what really happened, followed by building a sculpture made from natural materials, of their interpretation of a UFO
- **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)

Website

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

On-site facilities

- play areas, toilets, picnic tables, seasonal cycle hire and small café, bike park (for confident bikers only), parking for cars and two coach spaces (charges apply),
- Mobile phone signal - Weak/poor

Local Forestry Commission contacts

- The local FC Recreation Ranger is in Tangham, Rendlesham Forest (IP12 3NF) - telephone 01394 450164

Surrounding woodland

- Rendlesham is mostly coniferous woodland, but there are areas of mixed and broadleaf woodland within easy walking distance of the car park. In addition, heathland areas with their seasonal show of heathers, broom and gorse add bright colours to the verdant backdrop. Open spaces and sunny glades are ideal for quiet picnics. Ponds and wetland areas provide further fascinating flora and fauna.
- There are 4 waymarked walking trails from the site, including the UFO Trail; there are also two cycle trails which cater for all abilities of cyclist.

Self-led learning opportunities

- Woodland activities – trees and habitats, (see FC [downloads](#) and [lesson plans](#))
- Active / sporting – [cycling](#), walking, permanent orienteering course (maps available), sculpture quiz trail (adaptable by the teacher for the age group)

Learning opportunities from partner organisations

- The Forestry Commission works in partnership with [Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#), who offer a variety of educational activities for school groups at Rendlesham, and also manage the self-led schools bookings

Planning your visit

- **Contact us** – via our on-site learning partner [Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#) – you will need to complete and return a booking form, so that we can manage the number of groups on site
- **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 to gather further information from the information point
- **Health and safety** – we carry out regular safety checks of the area around the car park, play areas and 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 Rendlesham, please let the local FC ranger know as soon as possible

Accessibility

- The site and car park are relatively flat. Some of the trails into the woods are quite uneven, but there are more easily accessible options.
- An accessible toilet is available and clearly marked
- Disabled parking spaces are provided
- The seasonal café/kiosk is at ground floor level with no steps
- The blue walking trail is an all ability route – for information about the others, please contact the ranger
- With prior notice and for genuine access for less physically able learners, barriers to trails may be unlocked by local FC staff (if on site at the time of visit) to allow vehicular access

After your visit

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