

## **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: Wendover Woods, Buckinghamshire**

The highest point in the Chilterns is in Wendover Woods, so with fantastic views over the Vale of Aylesbury, miles of trails and a variety of interesting woodland habitats, it is an ideal place to bring your class or any other group for a learning visit.

Wendover 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.

Wendover attracts about 400 000 visitors per year. In the summer months, the site itself can be busy, but trails leading into the surrounding woodland in all directions, allow you to leave the hustle and bustle behind within a few minutes walk. Weekdays in term time tend to be quieter anyway, so the site is ideal for school groups.

### Example school visits

- **EYFS** – Understanding the world – exploring different habitats to look for evidence of animals and birds, discussing where they live and why, visiting the wildlife hide to look for deer and a variety of birds; if you are really lucky, you could even catch a glimpse of the shy firecrest
- **Primary school** – Design technology – investigate animal homes in the forest – what lives where, and why; consider what makes a good home; follow this up by planning, designing and building your own natural shelters in the dedicated denbuilding area (please enquire about using this area in advance)
- **Secondary school** – Year 7 settling in, getting to know each other – work in teams to complete some or all of the 20 point orienteering course – you could add an extra challenge of having a list of forest items to find eg pine cone, fallen tree, animal footprint etc
- **GCSE / A-level** – Geography fieldwork – human impact on the environment; conflicts in land use – balancing needs of forest for timber, people and wildlife – as well as maintaining and improving the landscape of an ancient monument (iron age hill fort); for background information, a factsheet is available from the local Forestry Commission office

### Site [webpage](#)

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

### On-site facilities

- Café, play area, ample parking for cars and coaches (charges apply), toilets, picnic tables, wildlife hide, viewpoints, bookable BBQs
- The mobile phone signal on site is patchy
- There is a classroom available to hire – please note that this is next to the Forestry Commission office, which is a good 30 minute walk from the main site; if you decide to book the classroom for your visit, you may wish to base your activities closer to it, rather than planning to start and finish from the main forest car park – please ask the local FC team for advice

### Surrounding woodland

- The car park and café at Wendover are 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. Within half a mile are the wildlife hide, iron age hill fort and several view points. Note – the 'highest point of the Chilterns' is not actually a viewpoint!
- There are several waymarked trails from the site, including the easy access hilltop trail, orienteering course and the family cycle trail.

### Self-led learning opportunities

- Woodland activities – trees, minibeasts, habitats, shelterbuilding (see FC [downloads](#) and [lesson plans](#))
- Active / sporting – walking, orienteering
- Hire a 'Ranger in a Bag' at Wendover
  - 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 Wendover are Amazing Animals and Fantastic Forests.
  - For more information, contact the local FC office – see above for details

### Learning opportunities from partner organisations

- [Green School](#) – provides occasional activities and sessions for schools and other groups at Wendover Woods

### Local Forestry Commission contacts

- The local FC office is a 30 minute walk from the site (or a 5 minute drive) – it is staffed Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8.30-12.30 – phone 01296 625825 or [email](#)
- At other times, the duty ranger can be contacted on 07796 313507

### Planning your visit

- **Please contact the [FC office](#)** – 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, and 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 trail leaflets and maps from the café or the leaflet dispensers
- **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 Wendover, please let the local FC team 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 – details are given on the website and in the trail leaflet
- The café is at ground floor level with accessible entrance
- With prior notice and for genuine access for less physically able learners, barriers to some trails may be unlocked by local FC staff to allow vehicular access

### After your visit

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