

NEWS RELEASE

29 March 2011

FORESTRY MINISTER TO SPEAK AT NATIONAL FOREST FORUM

Jim Paice, MP, the Minister of State for Agriculture and Food, will address a meeting in The National Forest on Thursday 31 March, at Conkers Discovery Centre, Moira, Leicestershire.

The Future of The National Forest, a forum for friends and partners, is one of the periodic major meetings of The National Forest's wider community. The Minister will be the final speaker in a series of presentations on the development of the Forest, what it means to people and exciting plans for the future.

National Forest Company Chair, Dinah Nichols, will update the expected audience of over 100 guests on the progress of the Forest and outline future plans. Stephen Woolfe, Chair of the National Forest Charitable Trust, will announce the change of name from the Heart of the National Forest Foundation to the National Forest Charitable Trust, and outline plans for the future and the Trust's work for the long-term care of the Forest with the National Forest Company.

Two local people who regularly volunteer in The National Forest will give a presentation on why they volunteer, what they achieve and how they benefit from working in the Forest.

Dinah Nichols will say: 'Despite the turbulence of the past year, I am pleased to report that we are in good heart, with continuing Government support, for which we are very grateful. We have met our target for planting, we are about to open the Cycle Centre with our colleagues in the Forestry Commission, and we have built a strong reputation locally, nationally and internationally.

'This is actually my last day as Chair of the National Forest Company and the last six years have flown by. My final words would be to encourage everyone to keep asking themselves: "What can the Forest do for me, for my business, for my organisation?" and let us work in partnership to achieve new things together. Equally, please ask: "What is it that I can do to help create a healthy, beautiful and self-sustaining place, The National Forest, for future generations?" I know we will all rise to the challenge of taking care of this wonderful green asset which is being created - and enjoy ourselves greatly in doing so.'

Stephen Woolfe will say: 'Our charity has worked in partnership for over 13 years in transforming the heart of The National Forest from dereliction into a woodland park with Conkers in its midst. In so doing, we have always enjoyed an excellent collaboration with the National Forest Company.

'With our charitable status we are delighted to be working ever more closely with the Company, collaborating on the long term creation and care of the whole National Forest.

'To these ends we are now known as the National Forest Charitable Trust helping to create a woodland legacy for generations to come.'

There will be opportunities for questions before the Minister is taken on a tour of The National Forest.

He will visit:

- Hicks Lodge, the new National Forest Cycle Centre, due to open in May. The £1.5 million centre includes a bike hire shop, visitor centre and café and eight miles of new off-road cycling trails. The smart new timber and glass visitor centre uses environmentally-friendly technology, including a wood chip boiler, solar panels and rainwater harvesting. The Minister will plant a tree with Ashby Woulds Town Council and Hicks Lodge Trust.
- Pick Triangle. A vantage point from which the Minister will see The National Forest in microcosm: a restored lake, clay workings, new housing and new woodland plantings.
- Rosliston Forestry Centre. The Minister will see the Visitor Centre, environmentally-sustainable business units, the lottery-funded Herbie garden under construction, and the centralised woodchip-fuelled heating system.

For further information on The National Forest see www.nationalforest.org

ends

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

DATE: Thursday 31 March 2011

TIME: 12.30 pm

LOCATION: Tree planting at Hicks Lodge, the National Forest Cycle Centre, Willesley Lane, Moira, near Ashby de la Zouch

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For further information on The National Forest visit www.nationalforest.org

Digital images are available, contact: media@nationalforest.org

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The National Forest area covers 200 square miles of the counties of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire. Its objective is to increase woodland cover within its boundaries from an initial six per cent to about a third. No multi-purpose forest on this scale has been created in the UK for one thousand years. To date the proportion of woodland cover in the Forest has already trebled to 18.4 per cent and 7.8 million trees have been planted.
2. Year by year, The National Forest has been steadily turning what was once one of the least wooded areas of England into a multi-purpose, sustainable forest. The National Forest provides environmental, social and economic benefits, including landscape enhancement, creation of new wildlife habitats and major new access and leisure opportunities. It is an excellent example of sustainable development – with environmental improvement providing a stimulus both to economic regeneration and to community pride and activity.
3. To achieve these objectives, the National Forest Company leads the creation of The National Forest, working in partnership with landowners, local authorities, private business, voluntary organisations and local communities and has strong support from Government, politicians and the public. The Company receives grant in aid from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
4. The National Forest Company and partners won the inaugural Sustainable Development UK Award, for their work in Ashby Woulds, at the heart of The National Forest.
5. The Heart of the National Forest Foundation was founded in 1998 as a partnership of the private, public and voluntary sectors. Since its inception, the Foundation has raised almost £30m to create Conkers and to provide for the effective regeneration of one third of the 1,300 acres of once derelict land surrounding the visitor attraction, at the heart of the wider National Forest. The Foundation is now known as the National Forest Charitable Trust.