

Ashdown Visitor Management Partnership Information Sheet January 2008

What is the Ashdown Visitor Management Partnership?

The Ashdown Visitor Management Partnership consists of representatives from a range of organisations involved with Ashdown Forest. The Partnership was formed in 2004 to encourage sustainable tourism in Ashdown Forest and surrounding area; namely tourism that benefits local people and the local economy without detracting from, or diminishing, the area's unique and valuable landscape.

The Partnership does this by promoting a better understanding and appreciation of the unique landscape of Ashdown Forest, its surrounding area and the wider High Weald AONB amongst visitors and local tourism and hospitality businesses.

What organisations make up the Partnership?

The Partnership consists of representatives from Wealden District Council, Ashdown Forest Tourism Association, High Weald AONB Unit, Tourism South East, Cats Protection, Conservators of Ashdown Forest, Mid Sussex District Council, Enjoy Sussex Partnership, East Grinstead Tourism Information Centre and East Sussex County Council.

Partnership Achievements

The partnership meets 3-4 times a year and in the last two years has achieved the following:

- Supported the establishment of the Ashdown Forest Tourism Association.
- Undertaken a visitor survey of Ashdown Forest.
- Produced an Interpretation Strategy for the Ashdown Forest area.
- Employed an Ashdown Forest Interpretation Officer (Jan 2006 - March 2007).
- Helped develop new Ashdown Forest branding.
- Helped produce 5 different walks on Ashdown. Leaflets are available from the Ashdown Forest Centre and can be downloaded from www.highweald.org or www.ashdownforest.org Walk titles are:
 - Church Hill walk
 - A walk amongst Friends (from Friends car park)
 - Broadstone Amble (from Forest Centre car park)
 - Hindleap walk
 - A walk beyond the pale (from Goat car park)
- Held 4 tourism business training events covering:
 - Using local products
 - Welcoming walkers
 - Making the most of the High Weald AONB and Ashdown Forest's distinctive landscape
 - Green Tourism Business Scheme
- Installed Ashdown Forest Centre welcome signs and interpretation boards on Ashdown Forest.

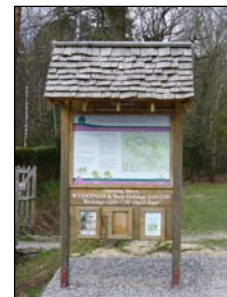


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With support from the Partnership, the Ashdown Forest Tourism Association (AFTA) have achieved the following:

- Since its launch in 2004 it has recruited 130 members
- Organized 2 food festivals
- Piloted a visitor bus service
- Started developing Ashdown as a visitor destination
- Arranged training events
- Secured DEFRA funding
- Successfully marketed AFTA through a new logo, website and leaflets, e.g. the AFTA area map
- Provided social networking opportunities for its members



Information on Ashdown Forest

Ashdown Forest is a beautiful place. It originated as a Norman hunting forest about 5600 hectares in size (20 square miles) where commoners had rights to exploit local resources and graze their livestock. The commonland was halved in the 17th century and it is this that comprises the public access space of today – the largest such area in the South East. Most of the Forest is mostly open heathland on the highest sandy ridge–top of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Ashdown has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to its abundance of rare plants and animals. For more information on Ashdown Forest, visit www.ashdownforest.org

Information on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The High Weald AONB is a historic countryside of rolling hills draped with small, irregular fields, abundant woods and hedges, scattered farmsteads and sunken lanes. It covers parts of four counties – East Sussex, West Sussex, Kent and Surrey – in the rural heart of South East England. It was designated an AONB by Government in 1983 to conserve and enhance its shaped by the people and their activities. The future of the High Weald's special landscape relies on safeguarding the traditional interactions between people and nature. For more information on the High Weald AONB visit www.highweald.org



How to contact us

If you would like to know more about the Partnership's work or wish to raise a particular issue, please contact the current Chairman, Cllr Sylvia Martin on cllr.sylvia.martin@wealden.gov.uk.