

Information document

Forest Look Out: Audience Development and Participation

Forest Look Out is a new 3-year programme for the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail. Taking place over 2017-2020, a series of innovative forest sculpture workshops, events and talks will be delivered to participants of all ages. Taking inspiration from the Trail's existing sculptures and a series of newly commissioned artworks, the programme seeks to increase understanding of the Cannop Valley's unique bio-diversity, ecology and industrial heritage.

About the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust



Cathedral by Kevin Atherton

The Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust (FODST) is a registered charity overseen by Trustees and led by Chair Nick Bury, former Dean of Gloucester Cathedral. The Trust works in partnership with Forestry Commission England which owns the land, to commission sculpture for a 4.5 mile forest trail. The trail is free-entry and attracts over 300,000 visitors annually. All of its sculptures are inspired by the unique heritage and biodiversity of the Cannop Valley. In 2016, FODST celebrated 30 years of commissioning pioneering art in a forest environment featuring seminal works by Cornelia Parker and David Nash and the iconic *Cathedral* sculpture, a giant stained glass window that hangs from the tree canopy, depicting and celebrating the rural landscape of Gloucestershire.



Coal Measure Giants by Henry Castle

More recently installed sculptures include *Sentient Forest*, a solar powered motion trigger artwork inspired by mycelium, a fungus network that lies hidden in the Forest floor. In addition, *Coal Measure Giants* by Henry Castle, tells the story of the Jurassic heritage of the forest and featuring two cast iron sculptures alongside actual 300 million year-old tree fossils. To coincide with our new education programme, six more sculptures are planned. More information can be found on our website www.forestofdean-sculpture.org.uk.

"The Sculpture Trail is a vitally important point of interest for children and families both locally and from further afield. As a school we have used the sculpture trail to enhance the learning experience for our children in many different ways and have always been extremely impressed by the sheer volume of learning that can be obtained in such a fun, liberating way. The sense of excitement as they progress through the trail, wondering what they might see next is a joy to behold." Mrs Haley McGoldrick Headteacher at Littledean Primary School, Forest of Dean.

The Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail is a rural venue on a direct bus route to Cinderford, 4 miles away, which has been identified being part of the 20% of UK's most deprived areas. The Sculpture Trail is the sole contemporary arts venue of international standing in the Forest of Dean region and subsequently has an important role in providing free access to art in the natural environment for local people unable to travel easily to galleries in major cities. Recent surveys show that 30% of our visitors are local, and 52% do not regularly visit arts venues elsewhere.

Experience of past education work

FODST continues to attract schools all year-round from Gloucestershire, Bristol and Wales. In 2014-2016, FODST ran a series of successful pilot workshops that were supported by local artists and volunteers. This included charcoal burning demonstrations and a rainbow den making. Time-lapse video footage of the event can be found here: <https://www.forestofdean-sculpture.org.uk/rainbow-forest-pop-up-event/>



Charcoal Burning demonstration on site at the Sculpture Trail

A pilot Rainbow Den Making Workshops for families in 2016

However, until recently we did not have the resources to provide regular education workshops and participation events, despite huge interest and demand from local schools and families. We also identified a need to increase engagement and participation of disabled and older visitors. Funding has been secured by Project Director Cathy Mager from the Ernest Cook Foundation, Summerfield Trust and Arts Council England to fill this gap in our support to the local community. To oversee the delivery of this new programme, the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation are supporting the cost of employing a part-time Audience Development and Participation producer.

What we would like to do:

Projects Director Cathy Mager, has written a new commissioning and participation vision for FODST 2017-2020 and has successfully raised funding from a variety of sources. In 2017-2020 we will offer a wide range of vibrant, accessible, surprising and inspiring free-of-charge activities to local schools and families. We will train a pool of local artists and volunteers to host a programme of events, workshops and talks inspired by the sculptures, heritage, ecology and natural materials found on site at the Trail.

We wish to grow to provide a year-round public participation events programme engaging 3,000 people in inspiring hands on activities, provide 100 volunteering opportunities per year and increase engagement with young people at risk of exclusion, isolated older people, low-income families and disabled people

Timeline:

October/November 2017: Audience Development and Participation Producer recruited.

February – August 2018: Pilot programme and evaluation of participation activities for local schools, older people and families.

September 2018 – July 2020: Wide ranging and innovative events programme engaging both local residents and visitors of all ages from further afield reaching 3,000 people per year.



Disabled visitors touring the trail in trampler mobility scooters