

New Opportunities for **Mortimer Forest**

Benefits for day and overnight visitors, including new and improved paths, trails, natural play, habitat enhancement and a viewpoint for all to enjoy, supported and funded by our partnership with Forest Holidays.

P Improvements to Entrance & Car Park

- Improvements to junction at Killhorse Lane
- New tarmac to car park surface
- New signage, interpretation panels and litter bins

e Ecological Enhancement Area

- 4.9ha in size
- Two new ponds, hazel coppice and scrub habitat for amphibians and butterflies amongst other species
- Semi-improved grassland
- Increased broadleaved planting

T Public Toilets

- Toilets with disabled access for all users
- Eco design

T Trail Improvements

- Extended Vinnalls Loop and Climbing Jack Trails
- New Multi-Use Trail around Forest Holidays location
- Improvements to the Easy Access Trail
- Trail links between Vinnalls Car Park and Forest Holidays Retreat
- Updated trail signage and waymarking
- Replacement of benches with seats

P Improved Natural Play Features

- Brand new play facilities
- Enhancements to the Secret Trail

V Viewpoint Feature at High Vinnalls

- New viewpoint feature
- 360 degree views from the highest point in Mortimer Forest
- Interpretation boards/toposcope

W Forest Holidays

- 68 low impact, sustainable cabins for short break accommodation
- Maintains and enhances public access
- Sensitive landscaping
- On-site rangers for educational activities
- Cycle hire

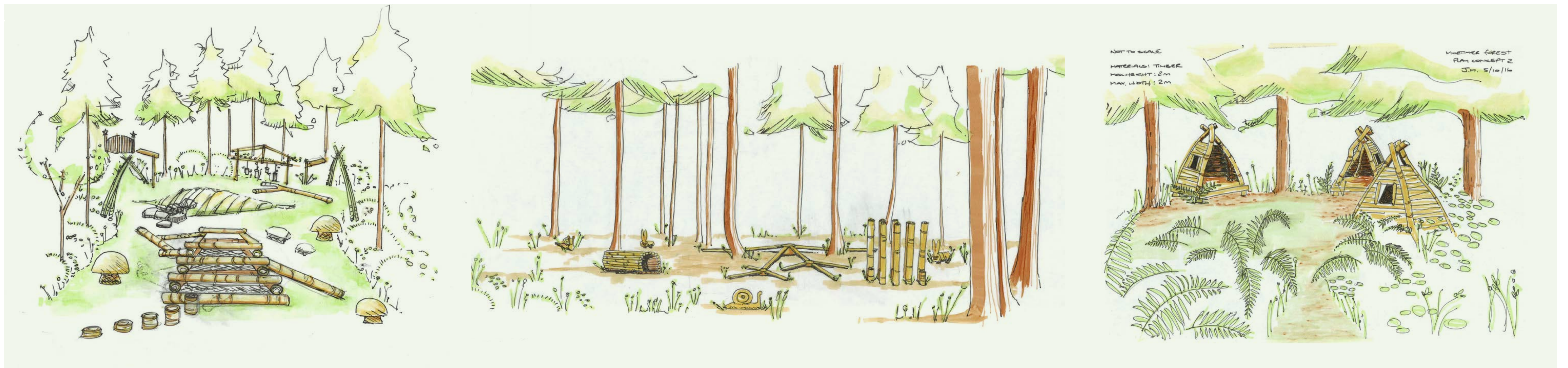
W Woodland & Habitat Enhancement & Management

- Contributing to the restoration of ancient broadleaved woodland in the area
- Additional enhancement measures to diversify a range of habitats and encourage protected species
- Substantial new native tree and hedge planting
- Easy access from public car parks and Forest Holidays

‘We would like to invest in Mortimer Forest, to improve the opportunities for people to visit and discover these woods, their wildlife and majestic landscape. This demands investment that balances the needs of people, both our visitors and neighbours, as well as the environment and local economy. The Forestry Commission’s partnership with Forest Holidays is well established at 9 great locations across the UK and has been successful in helping us deliver quality experiences in balance with our woods and forests. I have every confidence that you, our existing visitors, will benefit from the new investment in paths, natural play and the viewpoint from which the glorious scenery of Mortimer Forest and beyond can be enjoyed.’

Kevin Stannard, West England Forest District Manager, Forestry Commission

A family play area and space to explore



Natural Play:

Local schools will be invited to choose a design from suggested concepts adding to existing natural play features in the wood.



High Vinnalls Viewpoint:

The highest point in Mortimer Forest



Design process:

The viewpoint will offer 360 degree views using suitable materials in keeping with the surrounding landscape

Viewpoint Proposal:

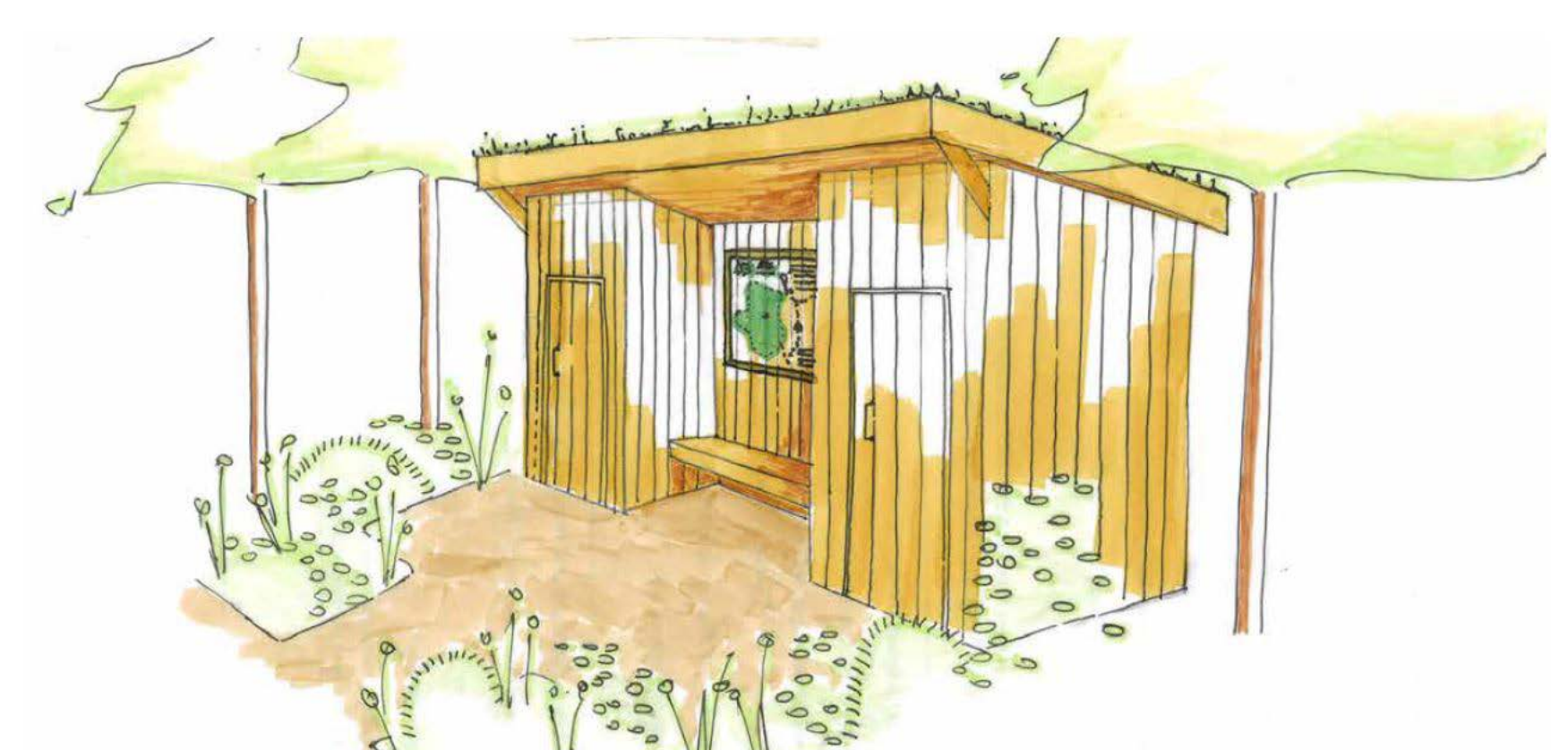
New bespoke feature with interpretation.

'We entirely share the Forestry Commission's goal of enhancing people's experience when they visit their local woodlands. Funding improved facilities is one way that we contribute to this. Being a good neighbour is an absolute priority for us.'

Bruce McKendrick, Forest Holidays CEO



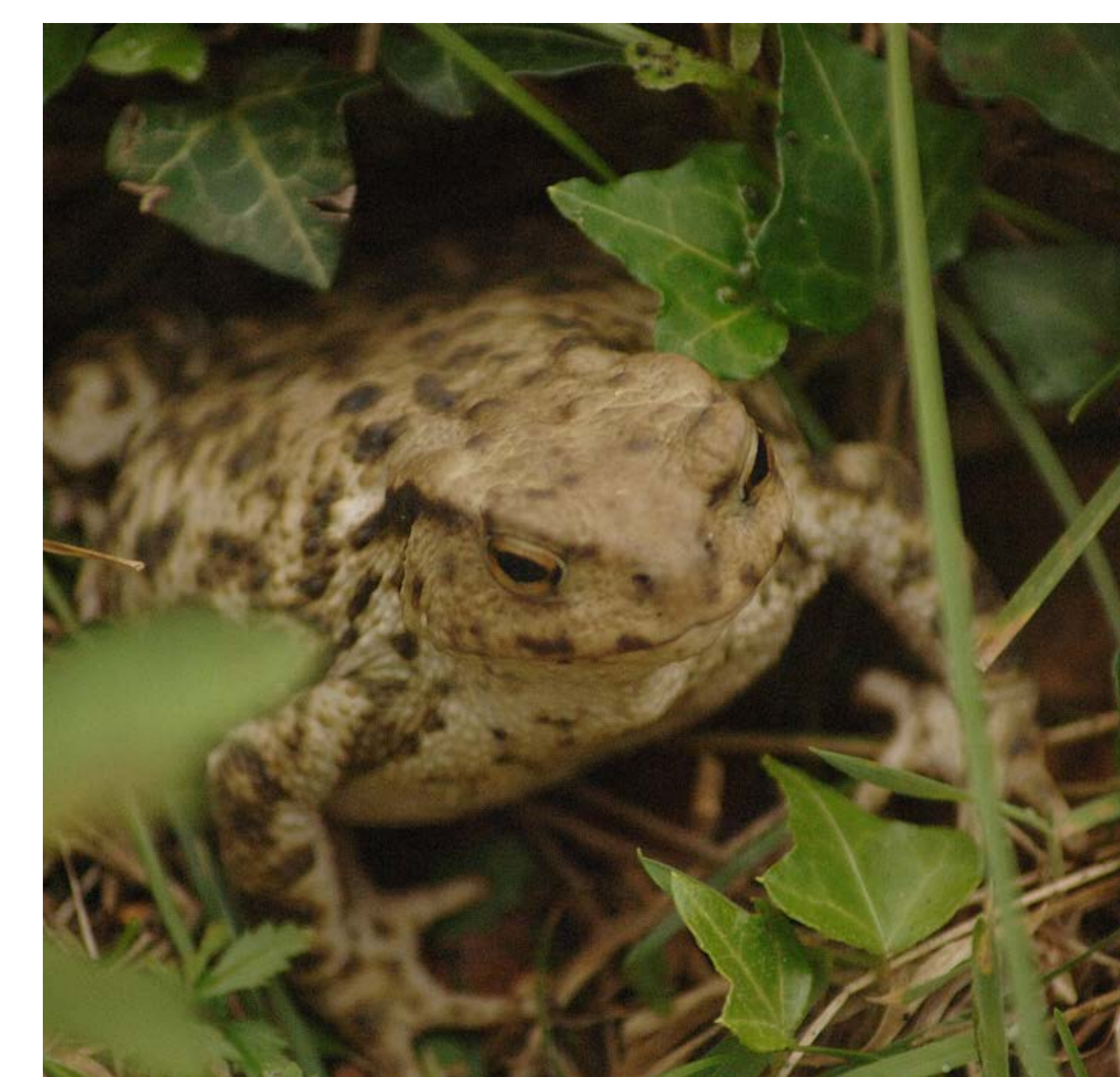
Family Play



Improving facilities in the forest, including:

New toilets, car park resurfacing, improved signage and interpretation and trail improvements with new benches

Your forest is rich in wildlife and flora - **we support habitat creation and improvement**



Our partnership with Forest Holidays will deliver:

- **A new Ecological Enhancement Area** of 4.9 hectares will be created in a recently clear-felled area following the 2014 storms. Broadleaved planting and the creation of hazel coppice and scrub, semi improved grassland and ponds will create a range of habitats and increase biodiversity.
- **A Habitat Enhancement and Management Plan** for an area in excess of 50 hectares will be managed to benefit birds, bats, reptiles, hazel dormouse, great crested newts, invertebrates and badgers.
- **A Woodland Enhancement and Management Plan** will ensure continuity of management within the surrounding forest. Managing the area to retain woodland cover will enable us to build on the existing semi-natural features over time.
- **Targeted new landscaping** - planting of mixed native trees and shrubs across the site.

'As with all Forest Holiday sites, the Mortimer Forest proposals have been developed from in-depth studies of the wildlife and wild spaces which I hold dear. The habitat enhancement plans will be of real benefit to our wildlife and will blend seamlessly with the wider woodland environment.'

Alan Reid, Wildlife Ranger (The Marches), Forestry Commission

A methodical approach, examining multiple factors



2014 | Preliminary studies into feasibility

- Mortimer Forest identified as suitable location for Forest Holidays proposals
- Juniper Hill selected as most appropriate site in Mortimer Forest by Forestry Commission and Forest Holidays
- Initial topographical survey
- Archaeological assessment
- Initial ecological assessments
- Report on status of Ancient Woodland designation adjacent to Juniper Hill
- Initial Transport Assessment work undertaken
- Initial Demand and Economic Benefit Assessment undertaken

2015 | Detailed surveys leading to initial proposals

- Ecological surveys continued throughout 2015
- Landscape Appraisal undertaken
- Tree constraints analysis undertaken
- Transport Assessment updated
- Demand and Economic Benefit Assessment updated
- Initial Flood Risk and Surface Water Assessment document prepared
- Initial Ecological Planning Report prepared
- Draft layout of a scheme for 75 cabins formed part of a formal pre application submission to Herefordshire Council planners 22 September 2015
- Pre application response received from Herefordshire Council 4 November 2015 - project continued taking on board comments which the scheme and any planning application would need to consider

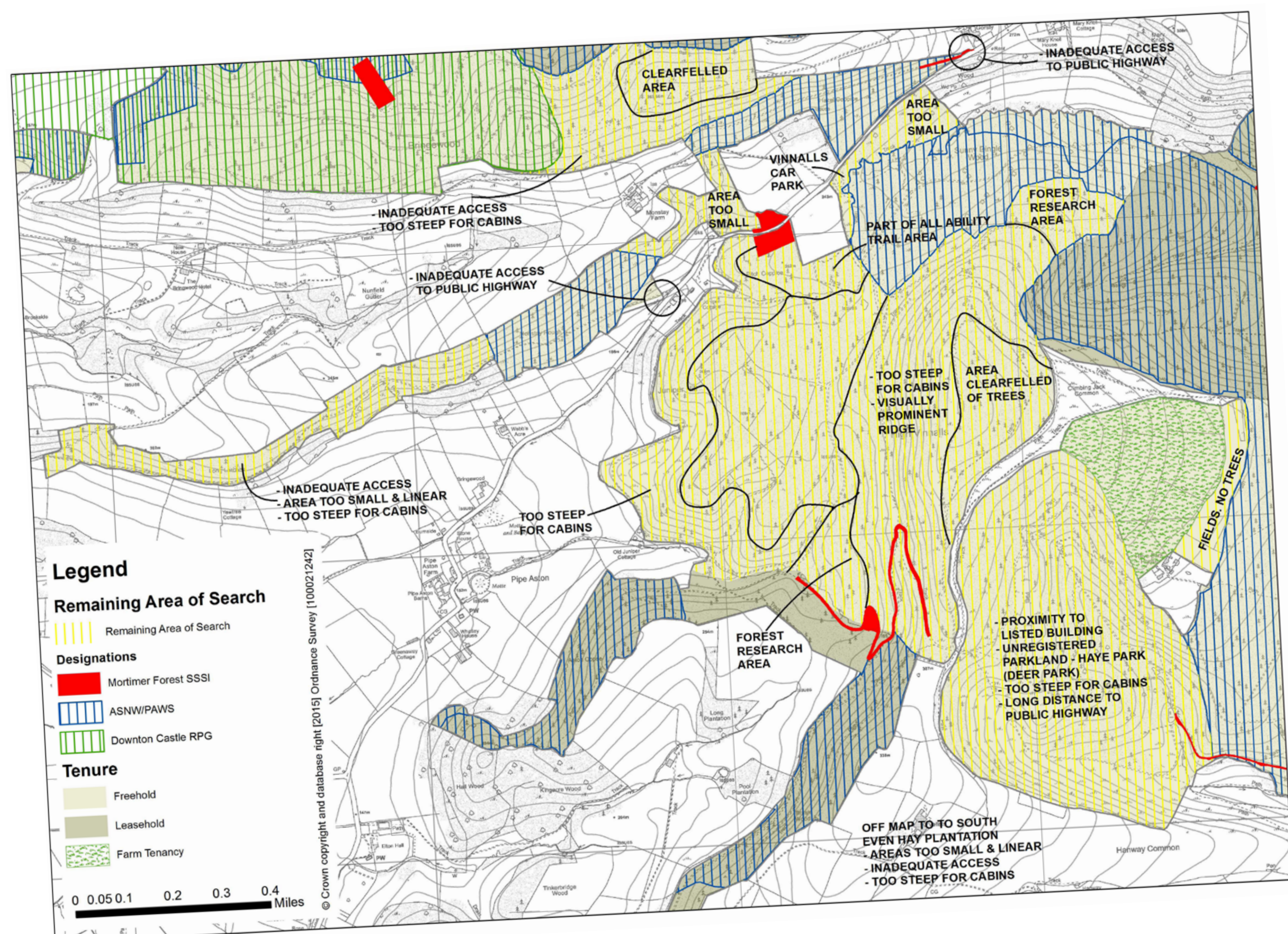
2016 | Review and further refinement

- Scheme and layout further refined in response to surveys - number of cabins reduced by 2 to 73
- Further detailed arboricultural and ecological investigations
- Further topographical survey work on areas affected by wind blow damage following clearance works, car park area, Easy Access Trail and High Vinnalls. Further ecological survey work in these areas undertaken
- Further refinement of scheme reflecting work above, number of cabins reduced to 68
- Details on plans for Ecological Enhancement Area
- Forestry Commission lead on preparation of Recreation Strategy for the Forest, Landscaping Proposals and Planting Plans
- Final drafts of Ecological Reports, Transport Assessment, Tree and Woodland Reports, Landscape and Visual Impact together with the documents above and updated Masterplans submitted to Herefordshire Council for further pre application review by their internal consultees
- Ongoing ecological surveys
- Veteran Tree Survey undertaken

2017/18 | Introducing the proposals

- Receipt of further pre application advice from Herefordshire Council in March
- Further work to develop access plan including further improvements at the junction
- Further ecological surveys undertaken
- Introducing the proposals to the local community
- Public engagement

How we selected this location:



'The detailed assessments of landscape, archaeology and wildlife in and around Mortimer Forest have given us a great opportunity to learn more about Mortimer Forest, and support our wider woodland management. We have worked to ensure the cabins and wider path network and habitat improvements blend with the Forest, whilst also delivering real social and economic benefits for visitors and the local community.'

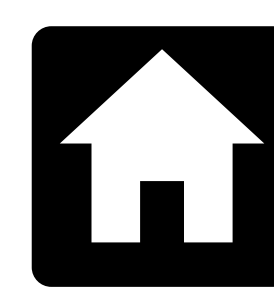
Kevin Stannard, West England Forest District Manager, Forestry Commission

Next steps in planning

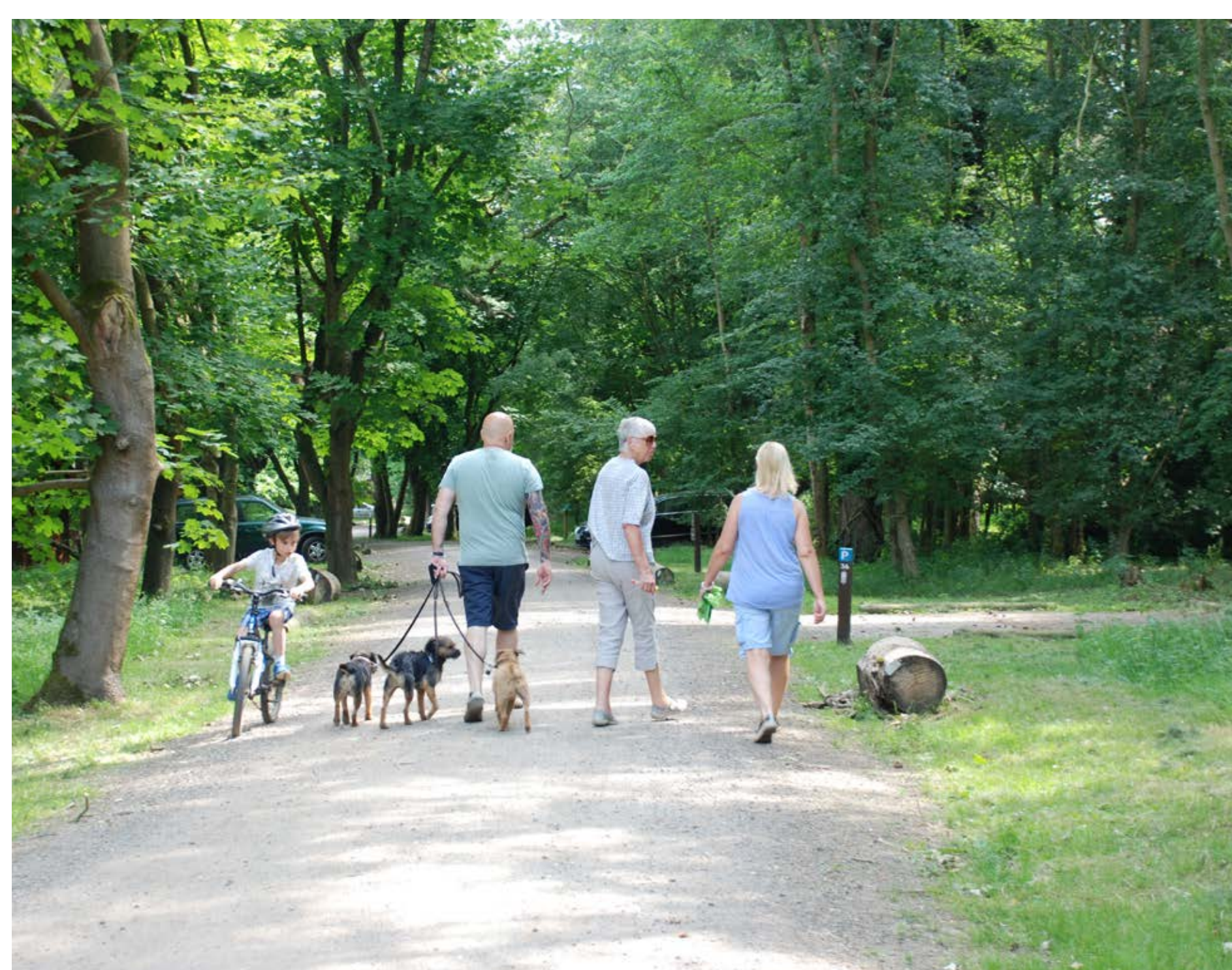
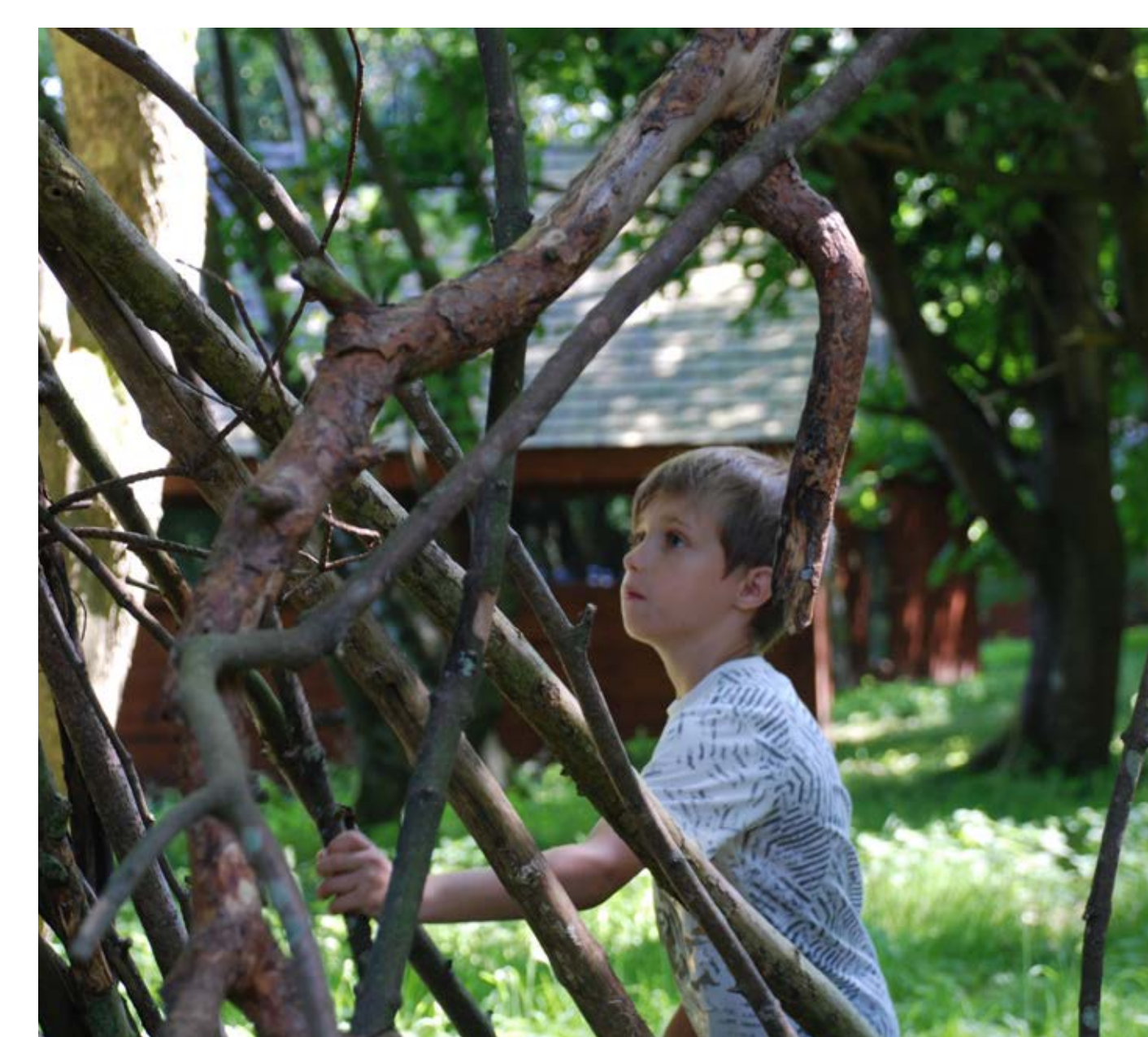
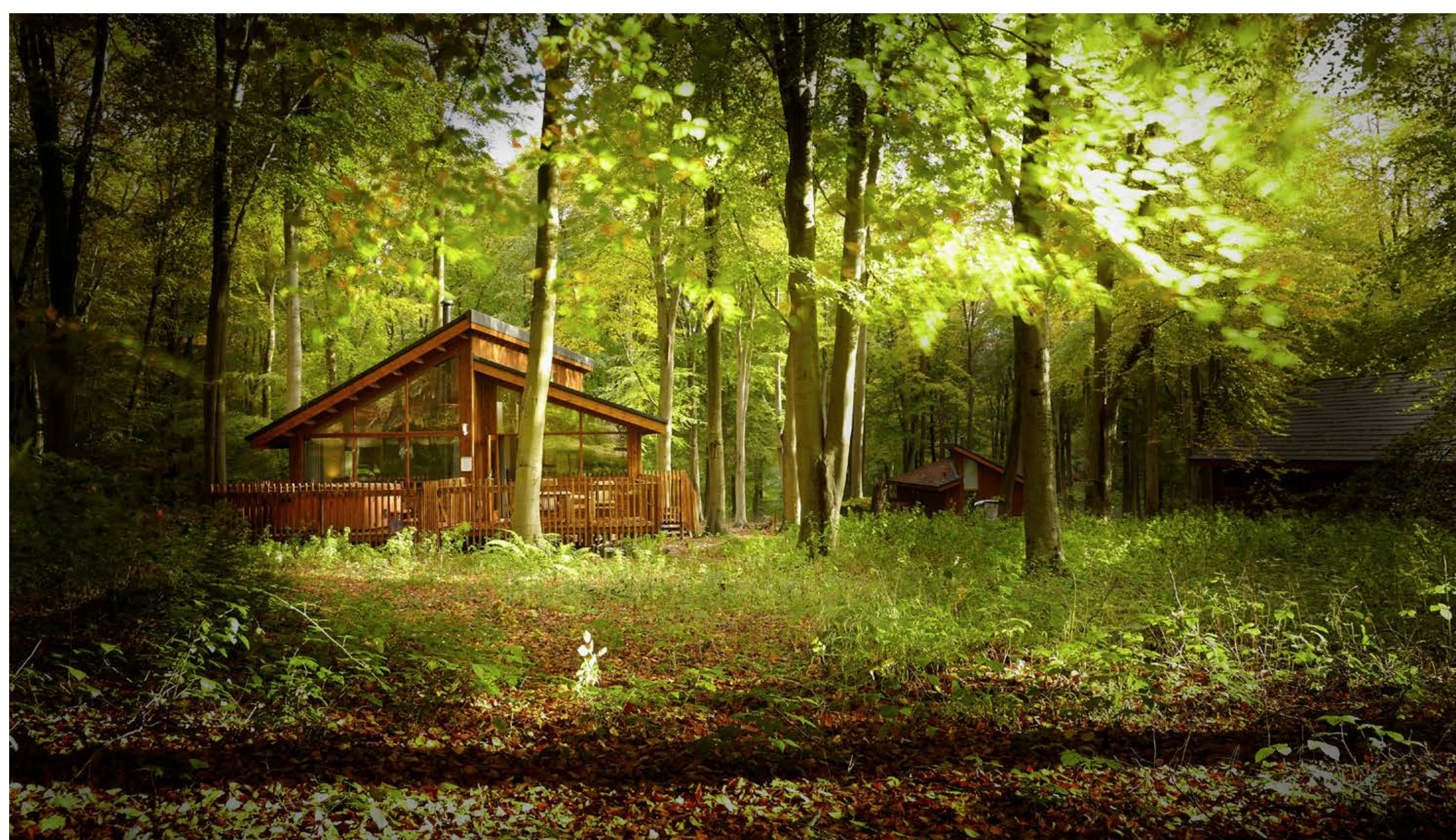
- EIA screening with local planning authority
- Further consideration of feedback from community and Herefordshire Council
- Refine and finalise proposals
- Submit full planning application to Herefordshire Council
- Local Planning Authority begins formal consultation on application
- Consultation responses received by Local Planning Authority
- Local Planning Authority concludes consideration and determines application

Proposed timeline for project

- If application approved further ecological surveys undertaken
- Discharge of planning conditions
- Set up of development site, including community liaison
- Build of cabins and recreation infrastructure
- Creation of ecological enhancement areas
- Cabins operational, links with local businesses established
- Ongoing ecological monitoring and woodland management



A unique concept in **forest tourism**

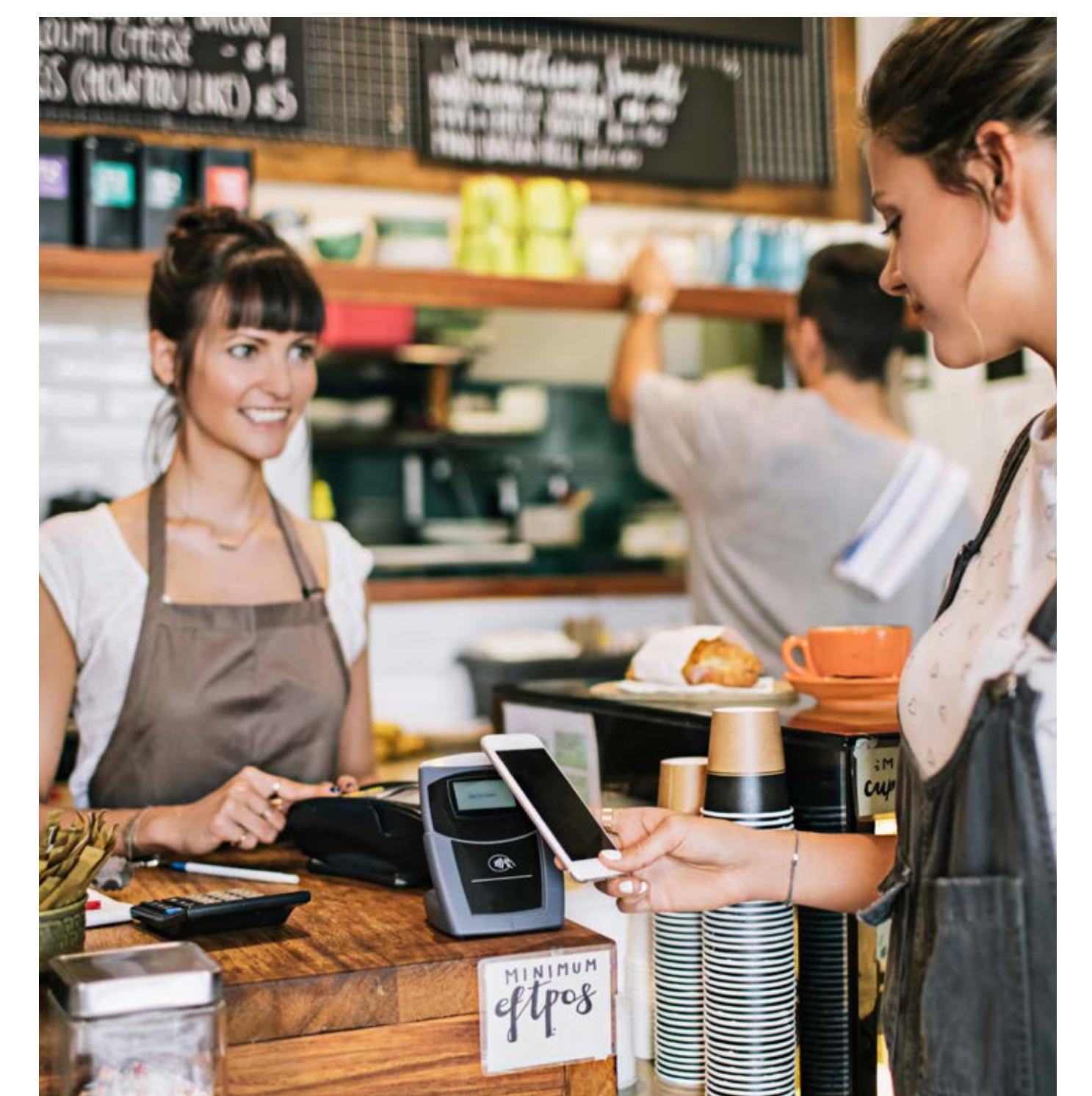


- Peaceful, relaxing forest escapes that connect people, nature and local communities
- Short break, eco-sensitive cabins designed to sit in harmony with the forest
- Successfully operating in 9 UK locations, including 4 within National Parks
- Established and part owned by the Forestry Commission
- Maintains and enhances access
- Light touch approach: low lighting and sensitive landscaping
- Small reception, cafe and shop, serving local produce
- Forest Rangers sharing an understanding of the environment
- Promoting local visitor attractions, pubs, restaurants and cafes
- Supporting local schools with Forest Schools activities
- Partnering with community groups and charities
- Sustainable travel plan including minibus to Ludlow train station
- Working closely with the Forestry Commission and other experts to support the sustainable management of the forest

'Having Forest Holidays in the forest not only broadens the experiences that people can have but helps to pay for those things too.'

Simon Hodgson, Chief Executive, Forest Enterprise England

Forest Holidays is a year-round tourism provider that **promotes local businesses**



£2.4m

per year boost anticipated to the local rural economy around Mortimer Forest including:

- Self-catering cabin guest spend in the wider area
- Forest Holidays spend on suppliers and services
- Purchasing from local suppliers for the Forest Retreat providing a showcase for many small businesses and artisans

Bringing and supporting employment to the area

- 43 full time equivalent new jobs created directly with Forest Holidays, including full-time and part-time roles with apprenticeships and career development opportunities
- 47 full time equivalent jobs as a result of the £2.4 million boost to the local economy
- 50 full time equivalent jobs during the construction phase

Overnight visitors bring spending power to surrounding businesses

- Forest Holidays is committed to championing local goods, produce and attractions
- Working in partnership with local business groups to promote the rural economy

Income also supports the management of local forests

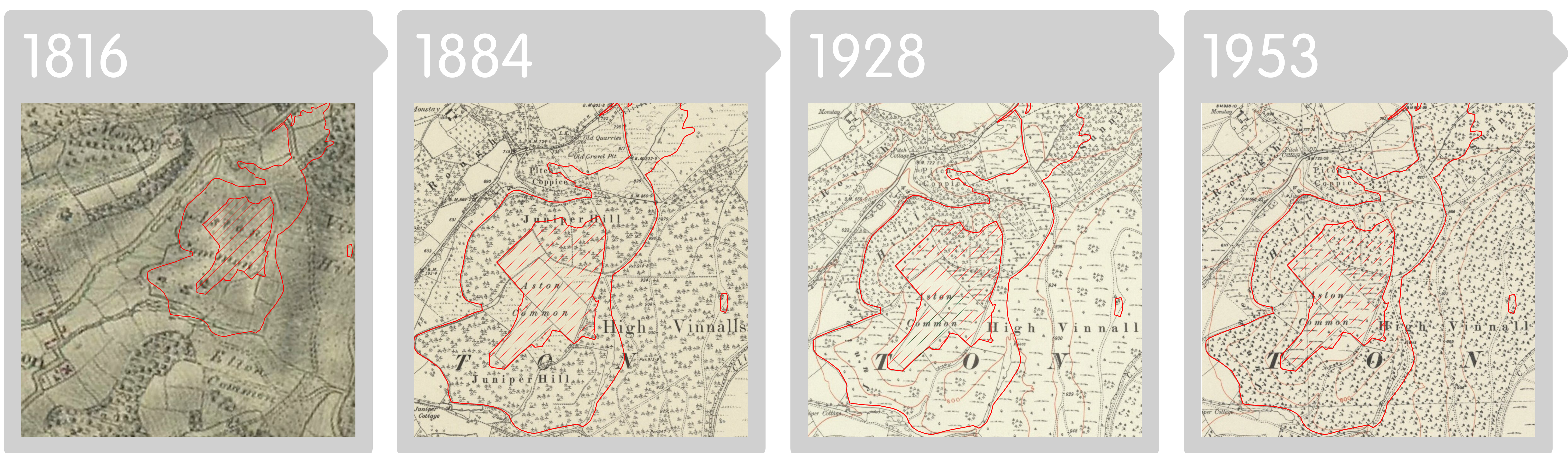
- Annual rental income in excess of £200 K per year paid to the Forestry Commission contributing towards the cost of managing Mortimer Forest
- Forest Holidays additional funding of £200 K towards improvement to car park, paths and trails, viewpoint and natural play.

'Eco-tourism is becoming an increasingly popular choice with holiday makers. Forest Holidays' cabins are a prime example of how local accommodation providers and businesses can create innovative, sustainable offerings that both protect wildlife and landscape, whilst boosting the local economy by welcoming tourists to the Park.'

Gordon Watson, Chief Executive of The Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park

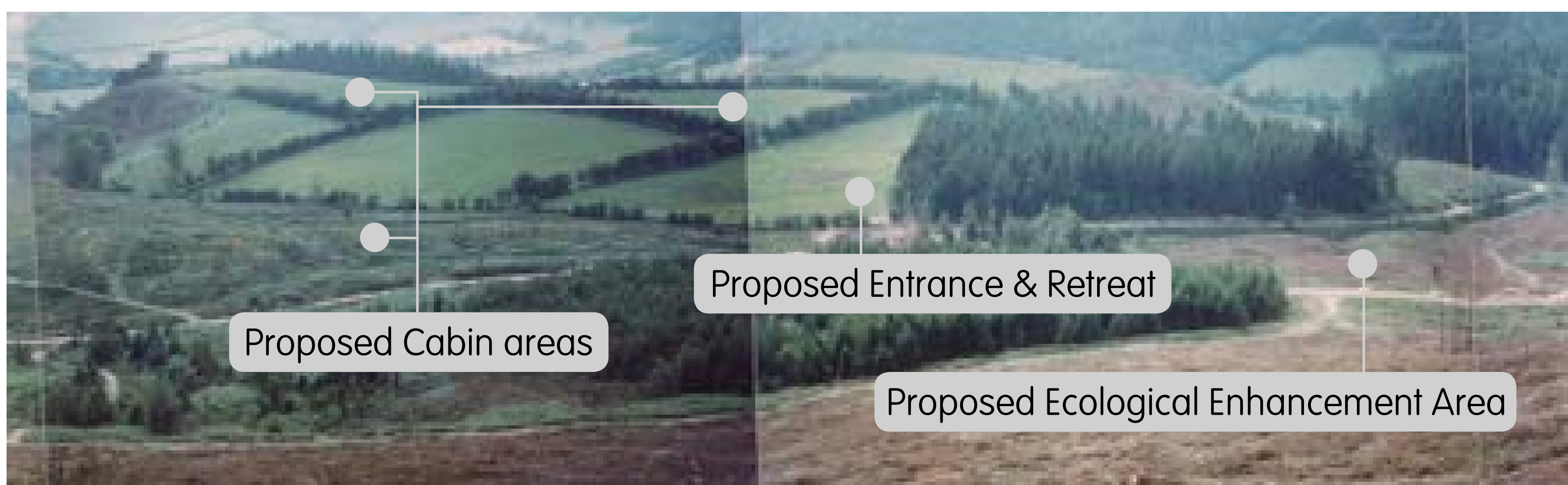
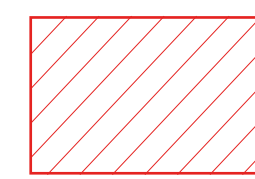
A brief history of land use at Mortimer Forest

Mortimer Forest was the site of an ancient hunting forest. In the medieval period it was made up of a combination of woodland, wood pasture and rough pasture. Since then, the Forest has continued to change...



Maps show changing tree cover / agricultural use overlaid with proposed cabin area boundary.

Source: Data provided through www.visionofbritain.org.uk and uses historical material which is copyright of the Great Britain Historical Project at the University of Portsmouth



Juniper Hill, within Mortimer Forest c. early 1980s showing pastoral/agricultural use.

During the 20th century, The Forestry Commission acquired the land increasing the productivity of the forest through conifer planting and harvesting programmes.

'Juniper Hill' covers approximately 5.75% of the Mortimer Forest, along the central western edge and was largely hedgerow lined open fields until 1987 when it was planted with conifers.

Significant clear-felling due to an outbreak of Great Spruce Bark Beetle left much of the area open space.



An aerial view of part of Mortimer Forest today, with the proposed area of cabins at Juniper Hill outlined in yellow.

The forest landscape has constantly adapted to meet changing needs. The current proposals will result in small changes to the surrounding woodland which will ensure the forest continues to be managed sustainably to meet the future needs of people, nature and the economy.