

NATIONAL FSA CONFERENCE 2026

Embers: The Power of Play



EVENT INFORMATION AND GUIDE BOOK



Friday 25th to Sunday
27th September 2026



Opens 4pm Friday
and closes at
2.30pm Sunday



Walesby Forest
Nottingham



Thank you for downloading the Forest School Association National Conference 2026 guide for Embers: The Power of Play.

Inside you'll find everything you need to help you make the most of your conference experience — from practical information, maps and workshop details, to reflections, essays and inspiring thoughts on play to enjoy throughout the weekend.

This year we've chosen to create our conference guide primarily as a digital companion. Alongside the conference navigation app, this helps us reduce paper use, minimise waste and lessen our environmental impact. It also means you'll always have the latest information right at your fingertips.

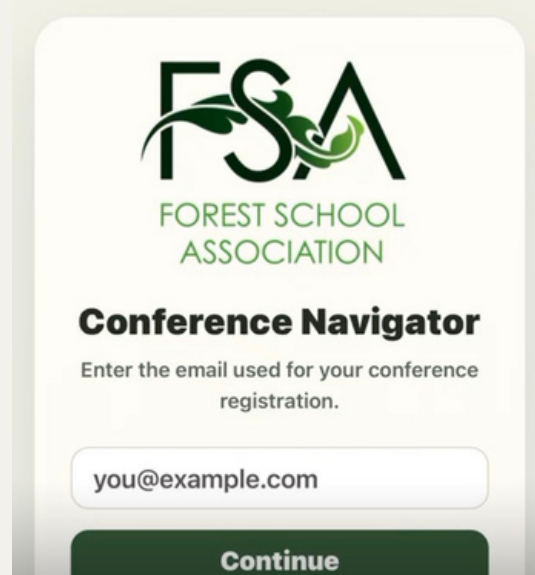
We recommend downloading this brochure to your phone or tablet before you arrive so it's available throughout the weekend, even if your signal is limited.

Rather than printing hundreds of brochures and workshop schedules, you'll find large-format maps, timetables, workshop information and event notices displayed around the conference site, making it easy to navigate wherever you are.

Choosing a digital format has also allowed us to create something richer than a traditional event guide. Throughout these pages you'll discover reflections, excerpts, quotations and short essays celebrating the many shapes of play — ideas to read beside the fire, ponder beneath the trees, discuss with friends or simply carry with you as you journey through the conference.

We hope this guide becomes more than something to help you find your next workshop. We hope it becomes part of your conference experience.

We look forward to welcoming you all in September!



Download the FSA National Conference navigational tool app here



This is a digital-first conference guide. Please download it to your device before arriving and only print the pages you genuinely need!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pages Content

4-19

WELCOME - Chair, Patron, FSA, FSA membership and FSA schemes

20-45

PLACE - Arriving, belonging and caring for Walesby, maps

46-63

WHY PLAY? - Commissioned writings
One little word. Many ways of seeing.

64-90

THE WEEKEND -
Your weekend. Your way.

91-109

PLAY IN PRACTICE - The conference workshops : Follow the pathways that spark your curiosity

110-124

OUR CONFERENCE PARTNERS -
The organisations helping bring Embers to life

125-127

GRATITUDES -
The Ember Crew team



WELCOME



- Welcome from the FSA Chair
- Welcome from the FSA Patron
- About the Forest School Association
- FSA Membership
- The 6 principles
- Growing a Forest School from the roots up! - The FSA Book
- Recognised Forest School Providers
- FSA Endorsed Forest School Trainers
- FSA Affiliated Local Groups



A warm welcome



A very warm welcome to the Forest School Association National Conference 2026 - Embers: The Power of Play. We are delighted to welcome you to Walesby Forest for a weekend of connection, reflection, learning, creativity and play.

This conference is a celebration of the Forest School community in all its richness - practitioners, trainers, researchers, local groups, recognised providers, volunteers, partners and friends coming together to share experience, challenge thinking, deepen practice and strengthen the movement we are all part of.

This year also marks an exciting new chapter for the Forest School Association as we welcome four new Trustees — Ashley Wilson, Danielle Earley, Dr Frances Harris and James Trotman. They join our existing Board in helping guide and support the Association as we continue to grow, listen, learn and respond to the needs of the Forest School community.

Throughout the weekend, we hope you find space to be inspired, to ask questions, to make new connections, to reconnect with old friends and to discover ideas that stay with you long after you leave.

Most of all, we hope you give yourself permission to experience the conference in your own way.

Follow your curiosity.

Join the conversations that matter to you.

Rest when you need to.

Share what you know.

Try something new.

And, of course, **remember to play.**

Thank you for being part of this community and for everything you bring to Forest School.

We hope you have a wonderful weekend.

With warm wishes,

The Forest School Association



A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR – MATT HARDER

“We don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing”
(attributed to George Bernard Shaw)

Welcome

As we gather together for this year's Forest School Association Conference, I find myself reflecting on the remarkable power held within Play.

It is something so simple, yet complex, so instinctive, and yet so often undervalued.

Our theme for 2026, Embers: The Power of Play, feels especially timely. Embers are small, glowing remnants of a fire, carrying warmth, possibility and potential. They remind us that even the smallest spark can grow into something transformative.

Play is much the same. It begins with curiosity, wonder, movement, imagination, connection, risk and experimentation. Yet from those seemingly ordinary moments emerge confidence, resilience, belonging, creativity and joy.

In a world that can often feel increasingly hurried, measured and uncertain, play offers something profoundly important. It invites us to slow down, to notice, to connect, and to rediscover ways of being that are deeply human. It reminds us that learning is not only something we do; it is something we experience with our whole selves.



This year's conference also provides a valuable opportunity to explore the conversations between Forest School and playwork.

Both traditions share a deep respect for children and young people, for agency, for relationships, for environments that invite exploration, and for the belief that growth happens when individuals are trusted to engage with the world in meaningful ways. Bringing these perspectives together strengthens our collective understanding and helps us continue developing practice that is responsive, reflective and rooted in lived experience.

One of the greatest privileges of this gathering of professionals is the opportunity to come together as a national (and international) community - especially after a gap last year.

Whether you are attending your first conference or have been part of this movement for many years, you are part of a collective voice that continues to shape and champion Forest School across the UK and beyond.

The relationships formed here, the conversations shared around workshops, campfires, woodland paths and coffee tables, often become the sparks that inspire new ideas, collaborations and directions long after the conference has ended.

There is something particularly fitting about gathering at Walesby Forest. Surrounded by woodland, immersed in nature and sharing space together, we are reminded of the environments that sit at the heart of our work. These places invite reflection, challenge, creativity and connection. They provide a living backdrop for the discussions we have and the experiences we share throughout the weekend. As an organisation, this has also been a year of development and reflection.

We are delighted to welcome new Trustees to the Forest School Association and are grateful for the energy, expertise and perspectives they bring.

Alongside this, we continue to engage in important strategic work, considering how we best support practitioners, strengthen our community, advocate for Forest School values and build a sustainable future for the organisation. While the landscape around us continues to evolve, our commitment remains clear: to support, champion and connect the Forest School community.

This conference would not be possible without the generosity, dedication and enthusiasm of so many people. My heartfelt thanks go to our keynote speakers, whose insights will challenge and inspire us; to our workshop providers, who so willingly share their knowledge, skills and experience; and to our sponsors, whose support helps make this event possible. I would also like to extend sincere thanks to the volunteers and conference team whose countless hours of planning, organising and behind-the-scenes work have brought this gathering to life.

Their commitment often goes unseen, but it is deeply appreciated. And finally, thank you to every delegate attending this year. Thank you for the work you do in your communities, schools, woodlands and organisations. Thank you for your passion, your care, your willingness to keep learning and your belief in the value of this work.

Most importantly, thank you for being part of this community. I hope this weekend offers opportunities to learn, reconnect, be inspired, and perhaps even rediscover your own sense of play. May the conversations, experiences and connections formed here become embers that continue to glow long after we leave, helping to light the way forward for Forest School and for one another.

Matt Harder

Chair, Forest School Association



EMBERS OF HOPE FOR CHILDHOOD: WHY PLAY MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

By Tim Gill

Patron, Forest School Association

My professional introduction to children's play dates back to the early 1990s: the same period when the good people at Bridgewater College first started developing Forest School in the UK. It is a sobering thought, but since then, despite huge effort and much good work, the prospects for many, many British children have only gotten worse: especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Climate change seems to have turned Europe into a tinderbox. Global conflicts echo and amplify home-grown strife. Economic security is a pipe dream. Tech corporations are moving ever faster and breaking ever more things as AI spreads its tentacles and social media upends our bedrock sense of reality. It is no surprise that child wellbeing has been sliding for years. What is more shocking is the decline in children's basic levels of health and even their life expectancy.

And yet as a champion for more playful, child-centred, nature-connected learning, I am more hopeful than I have been for years. **Not optimistic, quite, but at least a possibilist** (to quote the late, great epidemiologist Hans Rosling, whose book *Factfulness* is the best treatment for global fatalism I have come across).

Paradoxically, one reason for my possibilism is tech: specifically, AI. Wait, what? How can this latest, relentless expansion of the digital realm be a force for good in education and learning? The answer, counter intuitively, lies in what is bypassed by the expansion of AI.

While AI is reconfiguring vast areas of knowledge and expertise, it leaves untouched much of the territory of hands-on, exploratory, playful learning. ChatGPT can tell you all the facts you like about trees. But it cannot capture that feeling in your stomach as you climb one a little bit higher than last week.

Resilience, self-efficacy, emotional regulation, physical literacy: these and other higher-order competences will long remain beyond the reach of the mechanisms of AI. These are the qualities that define us, as embodied minds embedded in the world, and that underpin the human and more-than-human connections that give our lives meaning and depth.

I am not naïve about the potential for AI to damage and distort, especially when its drivers are not human advancement but the pursuit of profit.



Thankfully, here in the UK some big questions in education and learning - about the public good, the role of educators, and the context and consequences of early years and school curricula - can still be openly discussed and contested. And no question is bigger than the health, well-being and life chances of our youngest citizens.

A new deal for children is beginning to take shape. There is a long way to go. But for the first time in a long time, I can see dots being joined. For instance, between the decline in outdoor, adventurous play and children's mental health. Credit here to US social psychologist Jonathan Haidt (author of the bestselling book *The Anxious Generation*): in a phrase that is music to the ears of Forest School types, he talks of children being naturally 'anti-fragile'.

One tangible outcome of this emerging new deal is the imminent UK social media ban. Whatever your views on this (and I am a sceptic), one thing is unarguable: Big Tech is facing the kind of public reckoning that - eventually - successfully reigned in Big Tobacco. And children are at the centre of this reckoning.

I am even more hopeful about what is unfolding in the world of planning and transport: a big focus for my work in recent years. Right now, Active Travel England is overseeing billions of pounds of investment in walking and biking, supported by ambitious, progressive policies and guidance that pay real attention to children. Indeed, its head, Olympian cyclist and businessman Chris Boardman, is outspoken about his central goal: giving children what he calls 'transport independence'.

No-one now disputes that children are being starved of the kind of stimulating, connection-building, real-world experiences that help them learn and grow into healthy, engaged, confident human beings. As forest school and outdoor play advocates, we know what 'good' looks, feels, and tastes like, thanks to our deep respect for children's agency, curiosity and creativity.

Yes, childhood is in bad shape. The experiential diets of many children are arguably more impoverished than for many generations. But fresh thinking is on the menu. And while we in the Forest School world cannot fix everything, no-one is better placed than us to bring together the right mix of raw materials and create the conditions for more playful, life-affirming childhoods.

Tim Gill,

Independent scholar, consultant and writer
Patron, Forest School Association



Being part of a nationally recognised, research-led organisation allows me to promote high-quality Forest School practices and be part of a community committed to upholding the core values of Forest School.

THE FOREST SCHOOL ASSOCIATION (FSA)

The professional body and UK-wide voice for Forest School

The Forest School Association (FSA) champions high-quality Forest School across the UK.

We bring together practitioners, trainers, providers, organisations and supporters who share a commitment to the Forest School ethos and principles.

Through professional standards, quality assurance, research, advocacy, training, events and community, we work to strengthen Forest School practice and help ensure it continues to grow with quality and integrity.

What your membership enables the FSA to do:



Champion Forest School

Giving Forest School a strong national voice.



Strengthen the profession

Supporting practitioners, Endorsed Trainers and Recognised Providers.



Grow the evidence base

Promoting research and connecting evidence with practice.



Protect quality & standards

Developing guidance and supporting high-quality practice.



Connect our community

Supporting Local Groups, events, roadshows and the National Conference.



Advocate for Forest School

Representing Forest School within education, policy and the wider sector.

Every membership strengthens the Forest School community and helps ensure high-quality Forest School continues to grow and thrive across the UK.

Your Forest School journey

Wherever you are on your journey, the FSA can help you take your next step.

Thinking of qualifying as a Forest School Leader?



Find an FSA Endorsed Trainer who has successfully completed the FSA's endorsement and quality-assurance process.

Ready to Take the Next Step?
Become an FSA Recognised Provider



Discover Forest School provision recognised by the FSA for meeting all professional standards.

Find Your Local Forest School Community



Connect, share practice and find support with Forest School practitioners in your area.

BELONG TO SOMETHING BIGGER

Become a member of the Forest School Association

Whether you're newly qualified, an experienced practitioner, a trainer, provider or simply passionate about Forest School, membership connects you with a UK-wide professional community committed to high-quality practice.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP GIVES YOU



Professional recognition

Be part of the UK's professional body for Forest School.



Learning & development

Access member webinars, resources and professional learning.



Community & connection

Connect with practitioners, Local Groups and the wider Forest School community.



Guidance & support

Access professional information, guidance and member resources.



A voice

Contribute to a collective voice championing Forest School nationally.



Member savings

Access member rates and discounts on selected FSA events and opportunities.

READY TO JOIN?



1 Choose your membership

Find the membership option that's right for you.



2 Join online

Complete your membership through the FSA website.



3 Welcome to the community

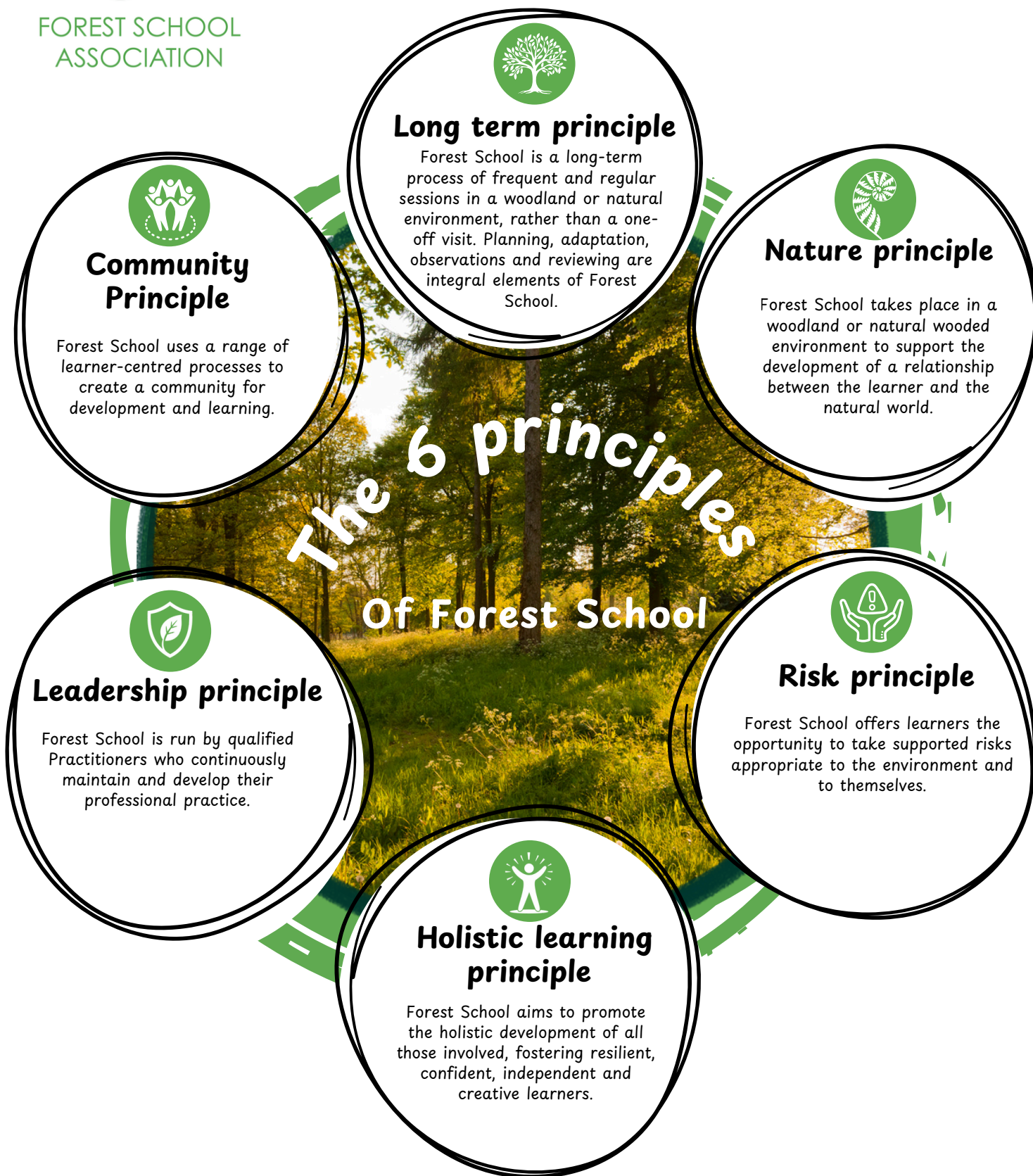
Access your member benefits and become part of the UK's professional Forest School community.



Scan to become a member

<https://forestschoollassociation.org/membership-options-page/>

CONNECT • LEARN • SHARE • BELONG



The six Forest School principles provide a shared framework for best practice. Together they help ensure Forest School remains rooted in its ethos—supporting meaningful relationships with nature, learner-centred experiences, holistic development, supported risk-taking and reflective professional practice.



The Long-Term Principle

- A minimum of two hours in duration, unless participant-centred needs require a shorter session.
- At least weekly or fortnightly across the year for the same participants.
- Small group sizes.



The Nature Principle

- Work in line with the site management plan, undertake site monitoring and make appropriate enhancements to the ecology of the site.
- Document possible environmental impacts of Forest School activity and how to minimise them.
- Plan sessions that include the sustainable use of natural materials.



The Risk Principle

- Offer opportunities for participants to take risks during sessions.
- Create and maintain a site risk assessment, daily risk assessments and activity risk-benefit assessments, and document your approach to dynamic risk assessment and emergency procedures.
- High ratios of adults to participants.



The Holistic Learning Principle

- Meet participants where they are and allow them freedom to choose how they spend their time.
- Recognise that behaviour is communication and facilitate accordingly.
- Offer mixed and optional opportunities for participants based on their needs and interests.



The Community Principle

- Make observations and reflections to inform offers made in future sessions.
- Proactively communicate the six Forest School principles to key stakeholders before Forest School sessions begin.
- High ratios of adults to participants allow for responsiveness.



The Leadership Principle

All sessions are planned and facilitated by a Forest School Leader who:

- Holds a Level 3 Forest School qualification gained face-to-face from an FSA-supported Awarding Organisation and a 16-hour outdoor first aid qualification, typically including paediatric first aid.
- Maintains a Forest School Handbook covering ethos and principles, adult roles, can and confidentiality, sustainability, relationships, complaints and safeguarding.
- Completes at least one day of face-to-face Forest School CPD each year.
- Sets participant-to-adult ratios through risk assessment, considering participants, site and activities, with an additional 'plus one' adult.

GROWING A FOREST SCHOOL FROM THE ROOTS UP

The essential handbook for building, developing and sustaining high-quality Forest School provision. Whether you are:

- Just starting your journey
- Strengthening an existing setting
- Training as a leader
- Supporting a whole-school approach
- Preparing for assessment or accreditation

This book provides a clear foundation rooted in the core principles of Forest School.

Reading this was like having the privilege of sitting around the fire with a group of knowledgeable and experienced Forest School leaders and trainers

Caylin Gans
Practitioner, consultant, and mentor



**EVENT
PRICE
£20.99**



You can also purchase online or head over to the bookstall in The Ember Hive at the conference

CONNECT • SHARE • LEARN • BELONG

The FSA has a network of affiliated Local Groups supporting Forest School practitioners within their local area. Groups vary according to the interests and needs of their members and offer all sorts of opportunities to connect, share practice and learn together. These might include skill shares, network meetings, CPD, social meet-ups, equipment loans, festivals, camp-outs, walk-and-talks and more.

Being part of a Local Group can be a great way to meet like-minded people, gain inspiration, share experiences and find support on your Forest School journey, particularly if you are the only Forest School Leader in your setting. Representatives from FSA Local Groups meet quarterly with one another and the FSA National Team to share information, ideas and challenges, and strengthen connections across the network. Many of our fabulous Local Group representatives will be at this year's conference. Look out for them near the Ember Hive, where they can help you discover your nearest group and answer questions about getting involved. You can also add a marker to our 'Where Are You From?' map and see just how far our Forest School community has travelled to be together. If there isn't currently an FSA Affiliated Local Group in your area, come and chat to Local Groups Coordinator Nell Seal, who supports new groups to get established.



Our Local Groups



Essex FSA

Email: essexfsa@gmail.com
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1526689920930210/>
 WhatsApp: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/CmkDYKx0Js2HiT8lFtwedJ>
 Local Group Rep: Emma Sweeney



Hampshire FSA

Email: admin@fsahampshire.co.uk
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/463152853864658/>
 Local Group Rep: Michelle George



London FSA

Email: fsalondongroup@gmail.com
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/999088477395940
 Local Group Rep: Charlotte Antoniou



Oxon, Bucks, Berks FSA

Email: admin@forestschoollassociation.org
 WhatsApp: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/FFQbLNQBpb15K1tGfggEl1>
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/518875974968395>
 Local Group Rep: Mhairi MacGillivray Edwards



Norfolk FSA

Email: fsanorfolk@gmail.com
 Website: fsanorfolk.wixsite.com/fsan
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ForestSchoolAssociationNorfolkLocalGroup>
 Local Group Rep: Emma Davey



Surrey FSA

Email: Surreyfsa2025@outlook.com
 Website: surreyfsa.weebly.com
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/630330020414452/>
 Local Group Rep: Julie Johnson



South-West FSA

Email: admin@southwestfsa.org
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/122892434548000/>
 Local Group Rep: Deb Millar



Suffolk FSA

Email: fsasuffolk@gmail.com
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FSASuffolk>
 Local Group Rep: Valerie Hyett



Sussex FSA

Email: sussexfsa@gmail.com
 Website: <https://www.sussexfsa.co.uk/home>
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/164679850266354/>
 Local Group Rep: Judy Agate

Why Join Your Local Group?

- Network with local Forest School practitioners
- Share ideas, skills and best practice
- Access local CPD, events and workshops
- Find encouragement, inspiration and support
- Help strengthen the Forest School community in your area
- Be part of something bigger

Find Your Nearest Local Group
Scan the QR code



Connect with your local community at the National Conference

SATURDAY 26 SEPTEMBER

17:15–18:15

The Meeting House

Ahead of a varied evening of fun, come and meet Forest School practitioners from your area, make new connections and share ideas about local and national Forest School activity.

Everyone is warmly welcome: whether you're already part of an FSA Affiliated Local Group, looking to connect with practitioners locally, or interested in starting a new group.

We will begin with a short welcome before dividing into regional and county groups. Each group will initially be given a quick, playful invitation to represent its area and what makes it distinctive. Materials will be provided, and you are also welcome to bring a few natural materials from your own area to include.

The session will take place in the Meeting House, where there will be benches and tables and access to outdoor spaces. After a short introduction and optional playful activity, we will move into small-group discussions using prompts on themes on which the FSA would like feedback and ideas. Groups may work indoors or use the outdoor spaces, and will record their thoughts on a prepared discussion poster. We will gather together again for a short conclusion, after which the FSA will collate the ideas and share a summary following the conference. You are welcome to participate in the way that feels comfortable for you.

We hope you will leave having met people from your area – perhaps even someone to have dinner with, join a quiz team or dance with later in the evening!

For more details and to book your FREE place via EEQU:

<https://eequ.org/book/fsa-conference-2026-local-groups-meet-up-with-forest-school-association-34287>

Local Groups Welcome Tent

Our FSA Affiliated Local Group representatives will be ready to:

- welcome you to conference
- give you materials to decorate a wood cookie badge (or bring yours from previous conferences!)
- help you discover your nearest Local Group
- answer questions about getting involved in your local Forest School community
- give you a marker to add to our 'Where Are You From?' map so we can discover just how far our Forest School community has travelled



FSA RECOGNISED PROVIDERS MEET-UP

SATURDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2026

13:00–14:00

ROBIN HOOD SUITE

Are you an FSA Recognised Forest School Provider?

Join us for an informal opportunity to connect with fellow Recognised Providers from across the UK. Feel free to bring your lunch!

Whether you've been part of the scheme for years or have recently joined, this is a chance to put faces to names, share experiences, exchange ideas and strengthen connections within our growing community.

Together, we'll explore the joys, challenges and opportunities of running Forest School provision, while celebrating the work happening across the FSA Recognised Provider network.

COME ALONG TO:

- Meet other Recognised Providers
- Share practice and ideas
- Build connections and collaborations
- Celebrate successes and learn from one another
- Be part of the wider FSA community

This relaxed gathering is open to all current FSA Recognised Forest School Providers and offers a valuable opportunity to connect with colleagues who share your commitment to developing thoughtful, principles-led Forest School practice.

CURIOUS ABOUT BECOMING A RECOGNISED PROVIDER?

If you're considering applying to the scheme, find Nell Seal (Recognised Provider Scheme Co-ordinator) during the conference and arrange a time to chat, perhaps over lunch or breakfast! Nell can help you explore how your provision relates to the scheme benchmarks, explain the application journey and point you towards the resources and support available.

FSA RECOGNISED FOREST SCHOOL PROVIDERS

The FSA Recognised Forest School Provider Scheme is a recognition and development scheme for individuals and settings providing Forest School experiences in line with all six Forest School principles. The scheme sets out the national professional standard for Forest School provision.

It offers practitioners and organisations a structured opportunity to reflect on their provision, evidence their practice and identify ways in which their Forest School practice can continue to develop.

Recognised Providers can promote their provision through the FSA's searchable online map and database, helping families, schools and communities find Forest School provision that is in accordance with all six principles. Recognised Providers also work together to share practice, discuss challenges, learn from one another and solve problems collaboratively.



“A very interesting, insightful and, rightly so, rigorous process.”

The FSA Endorsed Trainer Scheme helps people identify Forest School trainers who have demonstrated that they meet all of the professional standards for Forest School Training in the UK.

Becoming an FSA Endorsed Trainer involves a rigorous three-stage quality assurance process: a desktop assessment of the trainer's qualifications, documentation and training materials; interviews with learners who have completed their training; and a final professional discussion.

The process is designed not only to provide quality assurance, but also to support reflection and development. Trainers who have completed it tell us that they value the opportunity to think carefully about their training practice and to receive constructive feedback along the way.

An important part of endorsement is what happens afterwards. Endorsed Trainers become part of a collaborative group of trainers from across the UK who meet regularly online and face-to-face, to share practice, troubleshoot, reflect together and support the continued development of Forest School training.

ARE YOU A FOREST SCHOOL TRAINER?

If you are already a Forest School trainer and are interested in becoming FSA Endorsed, please seek out Scheme Coordinator Nell Seal or any of the Endorsed Trainers at the conference. We will be very happy to chat.

MEET ENDORSED TRAINERS AT THE CONFERENCE

Many FSA Endorsed Trainers will be attending the FSA National Conference 2026.

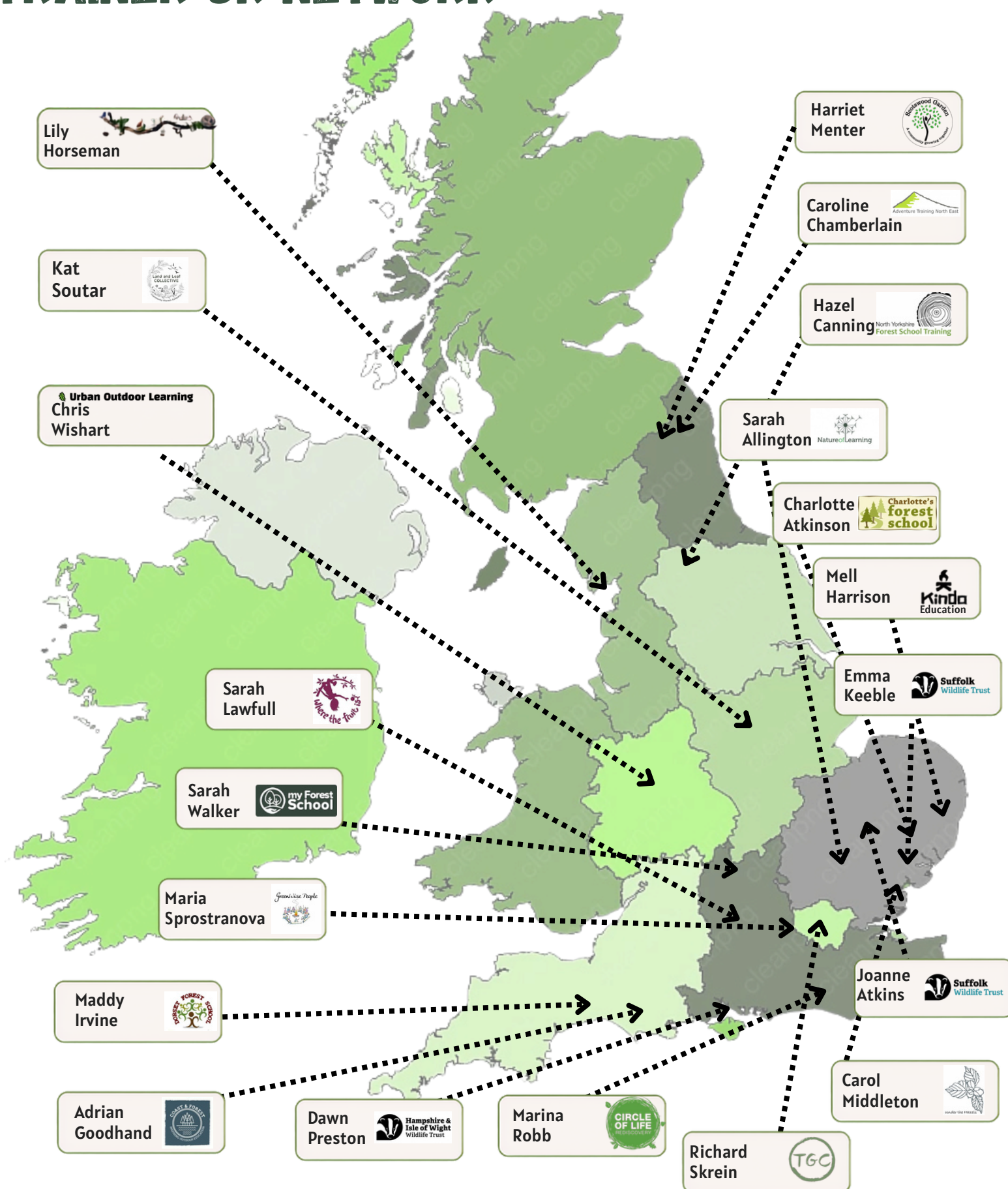
If you are looking for Forest School training, do take the opportunity to meet them, ask questions and find out more about their different approaches, experience and areas of work.

Visit the Meet the Endorsed Trainer Spotlight Wall in the Ember Hive to put faces to names and discover more about the trainers attending this year.



OUR FSA ENDORSED FOREST SCHOOL TRAINER UK NETWORK

19



PLACE

Arriving, belonging and caring for Walesby

- Welcome to Walesby Forest: A Living Landscape
- Caring for Walesby
- Getting to Walesby
- Shuttle Bus and Car Park Information
- What to Bring
- Arrival & Registration
- Event Control, Wellbeing, Accessibility, First Aid & Emergencies
- Site Map
- Workshop Location Map
- Event practicalities - phones, photos and drinking
- Tick Awareness
- Camping, Hammocking, Campervans & Accommodation
- Non-residential delegates
- Sunday Departure
- Catering
- Conference maps



WELCOME TO WALESBY FOREST

“Every place has a story. This weekend, Walesby Forest becomes part of yours.”

Nestled in the heart of Robin Hood Country, Walesby Forest has been welcoming people into the outdoors since 1938. Established through the generosity of Lt. Col. N. G. Pearson, the site has grown into an internationally recognised outdoor education centre where generations of children, families, Scouts, Guides and outdoor practitioners have gathered to learn, play and connect with nature.

Set within 250 acres of woodland, open grassland and natural spaces, Walesby is home to a rich mosaic of habitats. As you wander the site, you'll discover mature broadleaf woodland, areas of conifer plantation planted in the 1950s and 1970s, open glades alive with birdsong, and woodland edges that support a wealth of wildlife throughout the seasons.

Walesby Highlights

- Established in 1938
- Located in the heart of Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood Country
- Over 250 acres of woodland and outdoor learning spaces
- Home to mature oak, birch, Scots pine, maple, beech, hazel and mixed woodland
- Over 15,000 trees planted across the site since the 1950s

Biodiversity of the site

Today, the site spans 250 acres of woodland, open grassland and natural spaces. Many of the trees you see around you were planted by volunteers and Scouts over successive decades, including more than 5,000 trees in 1951 and a further 10,000 trees in 1979. Those young saplings have become the woodland that now shelters countless people—and wildlife.

Situated within the wider Sherwood landscape, Walesby is characterised by a rich mix of oak, birch, Scots pine, hazel, ash and sycamore, creating habitats that change beautifully with the seasons. Fallen logs slowly return to the earth, supporting fungi, mosses, lichens and countless invertebrates, while the woodland canopy provides food and shelter for birds, mammals and insects.



Bring your binoculars



As you wander the site, take time to notice the woodland around you

Nightjars & Goshawks: These elusive, priority-conservation birds frequently nest or hunt in the nearby Market Rasen and Sherwood woodlands.

Walesby specifically has been ranked "best in county" for its diversity of dung beetles, hosting 11 recorded species.

Notice: how different places invite different kinds of play



WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

**For one weekend, Walesby becomes our woodland home.
Let's leave it as we found it.**

Walesby Forest is more than our conference venue. For one weekend, it becomes the home of our Forest School community – and caring for it is something we all share.

As part of our Environmental & Site Impact Management Plan, we will be monitoring the impact of the conference throughout set-up, the event and departure. We will avoid environmental impact wherever possible, reduce what cannot be avoided, respond to changing conditions and restore affected areas. But we can't do it without you!

We're also working to minimise the environmental impact of this conference: keeping this guide digital, providing a downloadable navigation tool, printing only where necessary, choosing reusable materials wherever possible and reducing single-use waste.

Tread Lightly. Leave No Trace.

During your weekend, please help us to:

- **Use marked paths** where practical and avoid unnecessary trampling of vegetation.
- **Leave plants, trees and habitats undisturbed** unless taking part in an authorised workshop activity.
- **Never collect firewood** from the woodland unless specifically invited to as part of a workshop.
- **Protect our trees** – no nails, screws or unauthorised ropes, hammocks or fixings.
- **Take litter home where possible** and use the recycling and waste points provided.
- **Bring reusable bottles, cups and other items** to help us reduce single-use waste.
- **Dispose of food and wastewater responsibly** using the designated facilities.
- **Use only designated fire areas** and follow any fire restrictions in place.
- **Keep vehicles parked** once you have arrived unless movement is essential.
- **Respect wildlife** – observe, enjoy and leave undisturbed.
- **Leave your workshop, camping and gathering spaces better than you found them.**

Camping & Campervans

Please use the designated facilities for all waste and wastewater.

Chemical toilet waste: use the designated Elsan / Chemical Toilet Disposal Point beside the main shower and toilet block.

Ash: only completely cold, extinguished ash should be placed in the designated ash disposal bins.

Never empty chemical toilet waste, grey water, cooking water or other contaminated liquids onto the ground or into ordinary drains.

Your 5 Conference Commitments



TREAD LIGHTLY

Stay on established routes where practical.



LEAVE NO TRACE

Take it home, recycle it or dispose of it correctly.



PROTECT WHAT GROWS

Respect trees, plants, fungi and habitats.



FIRE WITH CARE

Only designated fires, fires off the ground extinguish thoroughly and follow current restrictions.



PLEASE TELL US

Spot an environmental problem? Tell Event Control.



BRING YOUR OWN

Pack a reusable cup and water bottle.

If you have a spare cup at home, bring that too for someone who may have forgotten theirs.

Small actions across our whole community make a big difference.



Fire & the Forest

With exceptionally dry conditions and fire restrictions affecting parts of the UK, fire risk will be continually reviewed with Walesby Forest.

If conditions require it, fires may be restricted or prohibited, including within planned workshops. Please follow conference signage and announcements – programme activities may be adapted to protect people and place.

See Something? Tell Us.



Caring for Walesby is everyone's responsibility.

If you notice litter, an overflowing bin, damage to vegetation, an unattended fire, a spill or leak, injured wildlife or anything that could harm the site, please tell us straight away.

Report it to Event Control at the Ember Hive, or speak to any member of the FSA team or Ember Volunteer Team.

"The journey begins long before we step into the woods."

We're delighted you'll be joining us at the Forest School Association National Conference 2026. A little preparation will help you make the most of your weekend, so here's everything you need to know before you arrive.

Event address



Walesby Forest
Robin Hood Way
Walesby
Newark
Nottinghamshire
NG22 9PF



Main Entrance to site
///proud.forest.hood



Travelling by Train

The nearest railway stations are:

- Retford (approximately 20 minutes by taxi)
- Newark North Gate (approximately 30 minutes by taxi)
- Mansfield (approximately 30 minutes by taxi)

Getting here



Walesby Forest is situated in the heart of Nottinghamshire, close to the A1 and A614, making it accessible from across the UK.

Approximate driving times

- Nottingham – 35 minutes
- Sheffield – 40 minutes
- Lincoln – 45 minutes
- Leeds – 1 hour
- Leicester – 1 hour 15 minutes
- Birmingham – 1 hour 30 minutes
- Manchester – 1 hour 45 minutes
- York – 1 hour 45 minutes
- Cambridge – 2 hours
- Newcastle – 2½ hours

Approximate driving times

- London – 2½–3 hours
- Essex – approximately 2½–3 hours
- Brighton – approximately 3½ hours
- Bristol – approximately 3 hours
- Dorset – approximately 4 hours
- Devon – approximately 4–4½ hours
- Isle of Wight – approximately 5–6 hours, including the ferry crossing
- Oxford – approximately 2 hours 15 minutes

Retford and Newark North Gate are both on major rail routes with direct services from London, York, Newcastle and Edinburgh, while Mansfield offers regular connections from Nottingham. We recommend pre-booking a taxi if travelling by train.

Travel Tips



Allow extra time if travelling on Friday afternoon, as roads can be busier.



If using a Sat Nav, enter NG22 9PF.



Car sharing is encouraged where possible—it's a great way to reduce your environmental impact and start the conference with good company!



Shuttle bus service

A huge thank you to our friends at Coventry Outdoors, who will be providing a complimentary shuttle bus service for conference delegates travelling by train from Retford train station to Walesby Forest. Jason will be our driver!

Shuttle departures to Walesby Forest (Friday):

14.00

16.00

18.00

Return shuttle (Sunday):

14.45

16.30

The shuttle service is designed to coincide with popular train arrival and departure times, making travel to and from the conference as straightforward as possible.



Car parking

All conference parking is located in Hall Field. Signposts and volunteers will guide you to the car park when you arrive at the main entrance.

On arrival, please have your EEQU parking ticket printed or the QR code confirmation email on your phone.

Our wonderful volunteers will be there to welcome you and direct you to the parking area and where to go next.

Once parked, follow the signs to the Conference Registration area.

Top Tip: If possible, consider car sharing with fellow delegates to help reduce our environmental impact.

Please ensure you have emailed Mimi and completed a booking form to reserve your space.

Scan here to register



Please ensure you have booked your car parking ticket in advance via EEQU

Scan here to book

Car Parking: £15 per vehicle



checklist

- ☐ Your printed car parking ticket, with your mobile number clearly written on the front
- ☐ Your Conference ticket (printed or on phone)
- ☐ Your workshop schedule from Eequ (printed or on your phone) all workshop registers will be printed at the FSA Registration welcome desk
- ☐ If camping, all your camping gear including suitable tent, sleeping bag, pillow and extra blankets and hot water bottle, tent pegs and a mallet!
- ☐ If glamping or in a lodge, all your bedding is provided but we recommend extra blankets and hot water bottle
- ☐ A trolley for transporting all your gear
- ☐ Camping or folding chair or extra sit mat
- ☐ Rucksack for carrying the essentials
- ☐ Torch or head torch and spare batteries
- ☐ Refillable water bottle - there are refill water points located around the site
- ☐ Notebook and pens
- ☐ Phone, charger, power bank, all the cables you need
- ☐ Cash or foraged/handmade goods for metre markets, most traders at the conference will have card machines
- ☐ Insulated cup/flask for hot drinks and plate for cake

Top Tip

You'll be spending most of the weekend outdoors, so dress for the weather rather than the season. Layers are your best friend, and waterproofs are always worth packing—even if the forecast looks promising!

Checklist for clothing and footwear

The British weather can be wonderfully unpredictable, so we recommend coming prepared for all seasons! Here's our handy packing checklist to help you make the most of your conference weekend.

- ☐ Comfortable trousers suitable for outdoor activities
- ☐ Waterproof jacket & trousers
- ☐ Walking boots or sturdy footwear, wellies (if wet)
- ☐ Warm layers (fleece/jumper), hats, gloves scarves, spare clothes & socks
- ☐ Slippers for the lodges and glamping tents
- ☐ Comfortable evening clothes and perhaps dressing up attire for the Ceilidh on Saturday night
- ☐ Lots of spare socks!

Camping/campervan Self-catering

Bring a camping stove, your own fuel and all the cooking equipment and food you will need

Glamping tents

Bring a camping stove, your own fuel and all the cooking equipment and food you will need or firewood to use the fire bowl

Weekend off site and Saturday day tickets self-catering

Bring all the ready-to-go meals and snacks you will need

Things to bring for sessions and events

Opening ceremony: a lantern
Connect with your local community event: some foraged materials from your local area

Wellbeing support throughout the weekend

Mary Maclachlan will be our dedicated wellbeing support throughout the conference and will be available if you need someone to talk to, a little help finding your ground or simply some quiet company.

You can call or text Mary to arrange a chat or meet-up: **07790 368117**

She can offer:

- 🌿 Empathetic, non-judgemental listening
- 🌿 Gentle breathwork or grounding
- 🌿 A quiet space and some yarn
- 🌿 A peaceful walk alongside someone
- 🌿 Or simply a calm and silent presence

There is no pressure to explain everything or know what you need. Sometimes a conversation helps; sometimes it's breathing, walking, making or simply sitting quietly with another person.

Mary will be there to meet you wherever you are.



Accessibility at Walesby

We want delegates to feel as comfortable and supported as possible while moving around the site. Much of the main conference area is relatively flat, although some paths and tracks are uneven.

- On the camping field we have created a quiet camping area, accessibility camping for those who need access to toilets and dropping off, as well as setting aside trees for those who wish to hammock instead.
- Accessible toilets and showers are available on site located at the main site buildings and in Kemp Lodge.
- Lower-bunk and room preference requests have been accommodated.
- Closer drop-off arrangements can be supported where needed.
- Volunteers can help with luggage, wayfinding and practical support.
- There is lighting in all buildings and around the camp centre, but beyond the centre there is no lighting. Please bring a torch or head torch for the evenings.
- Quiet spaces are available across the site for anyone needing time away from busier areas.

Need help?

If you need help at any point during the conference, please don't hesitate to ask. Look out for our volunteers in hi-vis jackets, visit Event Control in the Ember Hive, or speak to the team at the FSA Registration & Welcome Desk. Whether it's a question, directions, practical support or something you're unsure about, we're here to help.

Welcome to Walesby Forest

Whether you're joining us for the whole weekend or just for the day, we're delighted you're here.

Follow these simple steps to help you settle in, find your way around and begin your conference experience.



Registration Welcome Desk

- Once parked the volunteers will be at the top of the path for a quick Conference check and to guide you on the path to the FSA Registration welcome desk. It's about a 5-10 minute walk. We recommend a trolley.
- At the FSA Registration welcome desk our friendly volunteer team will be there help you to register and answer your questions. All registers will be printed alphabetically by surname so please find your name on the sheets and sign in. We will require an emergency contact too.
- Please don't forget to collect your wristbands: Green for full weekend Conference access, an orange wristband for anyone booked for catering or blue if just coming for the Saturday.
- All accommodation maps, as well as room allocations for lodges and glamping tents, will be printed off so you know where to go to.
- For those camping, follow the signs for the camping field, or use the map or ask a volunteer.
- For traffic flow and safety, if you are arriving in a campervan, please park up first and then return to the registration desk to sign in.



Drop off your luggage

If you'd like a little time before heading to your accommodation, you're welcome to leave your bags at the luggage drop-off point, located just behind the Local Groups Welcome Tent. Once you're ready, volunteers will guide you to your accommodation.



Need a comfort break after your journey? Toilets are signposted nearby or ask one of our volunteers.

Local Groups Welcome Tent

Along the path head to the Local Groups Welcome Tent.

Connect with Forest School practitioners from across the UK. Our wonderful FSA Affiliated Local Group representatives will be here to welcome you, help you discover your nearest Local Group and answer any questions about getting involved in your local Forest School community.

- Add a marker to our "Where Are You From?" map and see just how far our Forest School community has travelled to be here.

Make your own name badge at the Welcome Tent

Before exploring the conference, personalise your own wooden name badge by writing your name on a handcrafted wood cookie.

A huge thank you to Rustic Tim & Sons for their generous donation of the beautiful wood cookies used for our delegate name badges.





Event Control – The Ember Hive

Event Control will be based in the Ember Hive and staffed throughout the conference. If you have a question, need help finding somewhere, need practical support or are unsure who to speak to, please come and ask – we're here to help.

You'll also find Event Control noticeboards with key conference information, updates and QR codes, including links for:

- conference feedback
- workshop feedback
- support requests
- complaints
- useful information and queries

Important updates will also be shared through conference communication channels, but the Ember Hive is your in-person point of support throughout the weekend.

The Community Wild Tea Café in the Ember Hive

A warm welcome awaits.

After your journey, why not take a moment to rest, recharge and settle into the weekend?

Hosted by the wonderful FSA Sussex Local Group—Liz, Mel, Sharon and Becky—alongside our fantastic Ember Crew volunteers, the Community Wild Tea Café is the perfect place to begin your conference experience.

Enjoy a freshly brewed cup of tea, herbal tea or coffee, a slice of delicious homemade cake and the warm hospitality of our Forest School community. Whether you're arriving on your own, meeting up with old friends or making new connections, there's always a seat waiting for you.

Come as you are—we'll have the kettle on.



If no one is currently available at Event Control, please use this form to let us know about a concern, problem or piece of feedback.

If your issue is urgent or relates to immediate safety, illness or an emergency, please seek a member of the conference team, volunteer or First Aid team straight away.

Lindsey Chambers - Challenge First Aid: 07809 330900

Mimi -FSA Conference Coordinator: 07500 810823

Mary - Wellbeing and Welfare: 07790 368117





24/7 FIRST AID COVER

Challenge First Aid will provide professional First Aid cover 24 hours a day throughout the conference.

Location: The Ember Marketplace

If you feel unwell, are injured, feel overwhelmed, or are concerned about another delegate, please speak to a member of the Challenge First Aid team, Event Control, or any member of the Ember Crew.

IN AN EMERGENCY

Alert the nearest member of the event team immediately and give your location as clearly as possible.

PLEASE ASK FOR HELP EARLY

Please don't wait until something becomes serious. If you feel unwell, injured, overwhelmed or simply unsure whether you need help, come and speak to us.

First Aid coordination: Maxine Lock

Maxine: [07872 030647](tel:07872030647)



Challenge First Aid

24/7 COVER

First Aid support is available day and night for the duration of the conference.

FIRST AID POINT

📍 Ember Marketplace

what3words: [///chestnuts.archives.lucky](https://www.what3words.com/lookup////chestnuts.archives.lucky)

AED / DEFIBRILLATORS

AED units will be available at:

- First Aid Point – Ember Marketplace
- Kemp Lodge
- Walesby Main Reception



<https://www.challenge-firstaid.co.uk>



07809 330900



admin@challenge-firstaid.co.uk



Emergency evacuation

If you hear one long continuous blast on the airhorn at any point:



- Leave the area immediately by the nearest safe route and go to the assembly point.
- Do not collect belongings. Remain calm. Await instructions





Phones, charging and signal



KEEPING CONNECTED

Free Wi-Fi is available at Robin Hood Suite and other locations near the main buildings at Walesby. Mobile reception can vary across the Walesby site depending on service provider.

Charging points are available in the lodges, The Ember Hive and Robin Hood Suite

We recommend that you:

- arrive with devices charged
- bring a power bank
- download the conference guide / Navigator App before arrival where possible

Please go to event control or ask an Ember crew volunteer for help or advice.



Photography and filming



Photography and filming will take place during the conference for FSA communications and future promotion. If you do not wish to be photographed, please let us know. Please also be considerate when taking your own photographs, particularly during workshops and reflective spaces.



Fire evacuation

If you hear 3 blasts on the airhorn at any point it means there is a fire.

- Stop the activity and make area is safe.
- All event volunteers and delegates to muster at the water fountain hard stand.
- Await instructions.

EVENING BAR INFORMATION

BAR AT THE ROBIN HOOD SUITE

Open 6:30pm–11:00pm for relaxed, sociable drinking. As this is a licensed bar area, only drinks purchased from the bar may be consumed inside. All drinking vessels must remain at the Robin Hood Suite and should not be carried backwards and forwards across the site.

POP-UP BAR AT THE MEETING HOUSE

A licensed pop-up bar will also be available in the Meeting House each evening, serving ready-to-go canned and bottled drinks, including beer, cider and lager.

BRING YOUR REUSABLE CUP

To support our plastic-free approach, please bring your own reusable cup for drinks that can be served into one.

BRINGING YOUR OWN DRINKS

You are welcome to bring your own alcoholic drinks to enjoy elsewhere on the conference site.



Smoking and vaping

Indoor Spaces: Smoking and vaping are completely legally prohibited inside all lodges, tents, and indoor facility buildings.



With the warm weather and plenty of time being spent in woodland and long grass, please remember to be tick aware throughout the weekend. Check yourself regularly, particularly after spending time in woodland, grassy or leafy areas, and make sure you know how to remove a tick safely.

A huge thank you to Lyme Disease UK for supporting our conference by providing tick-awareness leaflets, cards and information for delegates. Please visit the Ember Hive to pick up resources – you're very welcome to take some back to your own Forest School setting to help spread awareness within your community.

 UK Health Security Agency

Enjoy the outdoors but 'be tick aware'

Ticks can transmit microbes that cause infections such as Lyme disease or tick borne encephalitis.

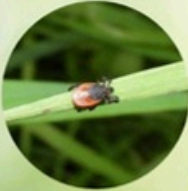
Being tick aware by using the following information can help to reduce the chance of tick bites and of being infected:

- you could be exposed to ticks whenever you spend time outdoors, including when in your garden or the local park
- ticks mainly attach to animals, but sometimes they may bite you, your family or your pets
- you can reduce the chance of tick bites by walking on clearly defined paths, using insect repellent and performing regular tick checks
- ticks can bite anywhere on the body, including in your hair. More than one tick can be attached to you at a time
- some tick bites can result in infection, so it is important to remove ticks safely and as quickly as possible
- the safest way to remove a tick is by using a pair of fine-tipped tweezers or a tick removal tool
- if you begin to feel unwell with flu-like symptoms, persistent headache, confusion or develop a spreading circular red rash (which usually appears within 1 to 4 weeks after being bitten), contact your GP or NHS 111 promptly. Mention if you were bitten by a tick or have recently spent time outdoors

Tick sizes compared to a one penny coin



Tick in the environment



Tick attached to skin



Lyme disease bullseye rash



Tick found under hair



For more information, search for the phrases 'ticks' and 'Lyme disease' on these websites:
www.nhs.uk www.gov.uk www.nice.org.uk/guidance

GOV-11370

For more information on Lyme disease please visit the NHS website scan the QR code below



BE AWARE • CHECK FOR TICKS • REMOVE SAFELY • SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE



WHAT IS LYME DISEASE?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection primarily transmitted by Ixodes ticks, also known as deer ticks or blacklegged ticks. Lyme disease affects people of all ages. The CDC notes that it is most common in children, older adults, and others such as firefighters and park rangers who work outside and have higher exposure to ticks.

Be Tick Aware

- Wear Tick Repellent:** Repellents with DEET, picaridin or lemon eucalyptus oil are the most effective.
- Create a Tick-Safe Zone at Home:** Prune trees, clear leaves and brush, keep deer and other wild animals out of your yard.
- Treat Pets Monthly:** Animal fur can act like a "tick magnet," exposing you when you snuggle with your pet.

10 Outdoor Safety Tips



Symptoms To Watch For



Check out your symptoms at www.lymedisease.org/symptomchecker for printable results you can give your doctor.

What If You Get Bitten?

- Don't squeeze, twist or squash the tick. Don't burn it with a match or cover it with Vaseline.
- Use fine-point tweezers or a special tick-removing tool. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible.
- Pull the tick straight out with steady, even pressure. Disinfect the bite area and wash your hands.
- Save the tick for testing (alive if possible) in a small bottle or plastic bag with a green leaf or damp piece of tissue. Label it with your name, date, site of bite and how long the tick was attached.





Everything you need to know if you're camping or hammocking on site.

Arriving and getting to camp

- Arrive at Hall Field Car Park and show your parking ticket. Follow the volunteers' directions to park.
- Unload your luggage and camping equipment.
- Show your conference ticket at the checkpoint at the top of Hall Field.
- Visit the FSA Registration Welcome Tent to sign in and collect your wristbands.
- Ask a volunteer for directions to your chosen camping area either: Main Camping Field, Hammock Trees, Quiet Camping, Accessibility Camping
- Make your way to your camping area, pitch your tent and settle in.
- Check the conference schedule to see what's happening, then enjoy your weekend!

Distance from Hall field car park to camping fields:
Approx 200-300 metres (about a 5-10 minute walk).



Where to pitch

Pitch only in the designated camping areas shown on the accommodation map. Main Camping, Quiet Camping and Accessibility Camping are marked separately. Please keep routes and paths clear for vehicles, emergency access and other delegates moving around the site.



Catered or self-catering?

If you booked catering, please wear your orange catering wristband when collecting meals. Allergen information is available at each service point.

If you are self-catering, bring the food and equipment you need. Gas stoves are permitted but must be raised safely off the ground, away from tents & dry vegetation. Wet the ground around your cooking area before use and extinguish thoroughly afterwards.

Good to know



Toilets & showers

Toilet and shower facilities are available on site and are marked on the accommodation map. There is a toilet block with showers and washing up facilities directly opposite the camping field



Drinking water

Refill points are located around the site. Please bring a reusable bottle. Please see maps.



Quiet hours

Please help everyone rest by keeping noise low between 23.00pm and 7.00am.



Pack for the weather

We recommend extra blankets and warm fleece layers for any temp drops at night.



Washing up

Washing-up facilities are behind the main toilet block on the camping field.



Ash disposal

Extinguish all fires thoroughly and make sure it is out. Dispose of cold ash in the designated ash disposal unit located on the camping field path.



Top tip

Bring a ground sheet for underneath the tent to protect from the damp seeping through which can make you colder quicker. A sleeping mat also helps. Keep your boots upside down or outside the tent to keep out rain and crawling critters. And lots of layers!!



Everything you need to know if you're bringing a campervan.

Arriving and getting to the campervan field

- On arrival at Hall Field, follow the campervan signs to the top of the path and wait for instructions.
- Have your conference ticket and campervan booking ready to show a volunteer on your phone.
- Once checked, you will be directed through the site to the campervan field. Drive slowly, look out for pedestrians and follow all volunteer instructions.
- Park where directed, settle in and then visit the FSA Conference Welcome Tent to register and collect your wristbands.

Bringing a roof tent? Follow the same arrival route and tell the volunteer so you can be directed to a suitable space.

The campervan field is approximately 250–300 metres from the Hall Field entrance – around a five-minute drive at the site speed limit.



Catered or self-catering?

If you booked catering, wear your orange catering wristband when collecting meals.

If you are self-catering, bring all the food, drinks and cooking equipment you need.

Portable gas stoves must be raised safely off the ground and positioned away from vehicles, tents and dry vegetation. Keep water nearby and extinguish them fully after use.



Grey water and toilet waste

Use only the designated Elsan and grey-water disposal points beside the toilet block, opposite the camping field.

Please never empty toilet waste, grey water or contaminated liquids onto the ground or into ordinary drains.

Good to know



Toilets & showers

Shared toilet and shower facilities are opposite the camping field and marked on the accommodation map.



Drinking water

Refill points are located around the site. Please bring a reusable bottle.



Keeping the field safe

Park only where directed, leaving 6 metres between campervans.

Once parked, keep vehicle movements to a minimum and access routes clear throughout the weekend.



Electric hook up

There are 12 electric hook-up points in the campervan field for campervans.

Please bring a suitable outdoor electric hook-up cable and any safe, compatible extensions needed to reach the available points. Position cables safely so they do not create a trip hazard



Need help

Look out for volunteers in purple hi-vis or visit Event Control at the Ember Hive.





Everything you need to know if you're staying in lodge accommodation.

Arriving and settling into your lodge

- Arrive at Hall Field Car Park and show your parking ticket. Follow the volunteers' directions to park. Unload your luggage.
- Show your conference ticket at the checkpoint at the top of Hall Field.
- Visit the Welcome Tent to sign in and collect your wristbands to confirm your allocated lodge and room.
- Make your way to Walesby Lodge or Kemp Lodge, following the signs or volunteer directions.
- Settle into your room and check the conference schedule to see what's happening.

**Distance from Hall field car park to the lodges:
approx 350-400 metres (10 -15 minutes walk)**



Facilities

Walesby Lodge and Kemp Lodge include shared kitchens, dining areas, toilets, showers and a TV lounge. Kitchen facilities include a cooker or hob, refrigerator, freezer, microwave, kettle, toaster, pots, pans, cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery. Gas, electricity and central heating are included. Bedding is provided, with each guest receiving a freshly laundered duvet cover, sheet and pillowcase. Although the lodges are heated, you may wish to bring an extra blanket for added comfort. Facilities may vary slightly between the two lodges.



Catered or self-catering?

If you booked catering, please wear your catering wristband when collecting meals. If you are self-catering, please bring your own food and any extras you need, and help us by washing up and disposing of waste responsibly.

Good to know

Which room have I been allocated?



At Hall Field car park please see registers for named room assignment.

Assignments have been based on the room and lower-bunk preferences provided when booking.

Please check your lodge, room and allocated bed before leaving Hall Field car park. If you need further help, more information is available at the registration desk on the main camping field.



Lower bunk requests

For those who have requested lower bunks this has all been duly noted and lower bunks have been assigned. Upon arrival please take notice of the signs.



Accessibility at Kemp Lodge

Kemp Lodge has step-free access using the ramp at the rear entrance, wider internal spaces and an accessible wet room with an adapted shower and toilet.

If you need help reaching the lodge or transporting your luggage, speak to a volunteer when you arrive.



Caring for shared spaces

- Wash, dry and put away everything after use.
- Leave kitchens and dining areas clean.
- Store food responsibly.
- Dispose of waste at the designated points.
- Be considerate of delegates who may be sleeping or resting.



Top tip

Pack a torch, towel, toiletries, warm layers, slippers, reusable cup & bottle – plus your food if self-catering.

Everything you need to know if you're staying in the Tented Village.

Arriving and finding your tent

- On arrival, head to Hall Field car park. Have your parking ticket ready to show on your phone or dashboard.
- Park where instructed and unload your luggage.
- Have your conference ticket ready on your phone for a quick check.
- Head straight to the FSA Conference Registration welcome tent. All registers will be printed off. Please find your name and sign in, collect your wristband and confirm your named glamping tent.
- Follow the signs and volunteer directions to the Tented village.
- Settle in and check the conference schedule for what's on where and when.

Distance from Hall field car park to The Tented Village is approximately 200m along a straight path.



What is provided?

The Tented Village bell tents include beds, storage, solar-powered lighting and an individual fire bowl. Shared toilets and showers are located nearby and marked on the accommodation map. Please check your booking confirmation for the exact bed and bedding arrangements for your tent.



Catered or self-catering?

If you booked catering, collect your orange catering wristband before visiting the Catering Barn. If you are self-catering, bring all the food, drinks, cooking equipment and utensils you need for the weekend, including a suitable way to store food safely.

Good to know



Which tent have I been allocated?

Tent allocations will be printed and held at the glamping allocation table at Hall Field car park. Please confirm your assigned tent before following the straight path to the Tented Village.



Fire bowls and stoves

Each glamping tent has a fire bowl. Please bring your own firewood and do not collect wood from the site. Keep fire bowls and portable stoves safely raised off the ground, keep water nearby and never leave them unattended.

Fully extinguish everything after use and place cold ash only in the designated ash-disposal point. Fire conditions can change. Follow all current Walesby Forest and conference guidance.



Quiet hours

Please help everyone rest by keeping noise low between 11.00pm and 7.00am.



Need help?

Look out for volunteers in purple hi-vis or visit Event Control at the Ember Hive.



Top tips

Slip on shoes to help keep the inside of the tent clean, head torches and lanterns to navigate dark paths, layered clothing and extra blankets for those colder nights, portable power bank to recharge your gadgets, and bring a favourite pillow!

Everything you need to know if you're attending the full weekend but staying away from Walesby Forest.

Arriving and registration

On arrival:

- Follow the conference signs to Hall Field car park.
- Have your parking ticket ready on your phone or dashboard.
- Park in the designated off-site delegate area.
- Have your conference ticket ready on your phone.
- Complete the quick conference ticket check.
- Visit the FSA Conference Welcome Tent.
- Complete registration and collect your wristbands.



Catered or self-catering?

If you booked a catered off-site ticket, please wear your orange catering wristband when collecting meals.

If you are self-catering, bring all the food, drinks and snacks you need while on site.

Ready-to-eat food is recommended, as off-site delegates do not have access to lodge kitchens or camping cooking areas.

Complimentary teas, coffees and cakes will be available to all delegates in the Ember Hive throughout the weekend so please bring a reusable cup and plate to enjoy. We are trying to be a low waste event. Thank you !



Leaving and returning

If you head off site between sessions or at the end of the day, please keep your wristband visible and follow any arrival guidance when you return. If you are ever unsure, just ask a volunteer or speak to Event Control.



Top tip

Pack for the weather and bring a torch if you plan to stay into the evening. Don't forget to bring a plate and reusable mug to enjoy the complimentary tea, coffee and cake!

Good to know



Weekend Access

Your weekend off-site ticket gives you access to the conference from Friday to Sunday, including workshops, keynotes, panels, meet-ups, community spaces and evening activities.

Overnight accommodation at Walesby Forest is not included.



Parking

Please make sure you have booked car parking if you are driving and have your ticket printed ready to be scanned. We have allocated a row for quick and easier access to come in and off site each day for day ticket holders.



Your arrival your way

Please check the schedule from Friday to Sunday so you arrive in good time and don't feel rushed. If you arrive early please come to the welcome tent to see what's on offer and where to go.



A comfortable day

Bring layers, a water bottle and anything you need for a full day outdoors.



Come and go with confidence – your base may be off site, but you are part of the weekend.

Everything you need to know for your Saturday visit.

Arriving for the day

- Arrive at Hall Field car park and have your parking ticket ready on your phone or dashboard.
- Park in the designated day-delegate area.
- Have your conference ticket ready on your phone for quick conference ticket check.
- Visit the FSA Conference Registration Welcome Tent to sign in and collect your blue wristband. Check the schedule to see what's on and where!



Making the most of your day

Your Saturday Day Ticket gives you access to the full Saturday conference programme only as included in your booking. Access to Friday and Sunday and/ or overnight accommodation at Walesby Forest is not included. Please use the programme and maps to plan your day, and do ask if you need help finding workshop spaces, the Ember Hive or quiet areas.



Self-catering

All Saturday day tickets are self-catering unless otherwise requested. Please bring ready-to-eat food, drinks and snacks. Day delegates cannot use lodge kitchens or camping cooking areas. A selection of teas, coffees and cakes will be available in the Ember Hive throughout the weekend.



Top tip

Check the schedule before setting off each day so you arrive in good time for your chosen sessions. Please bring your own plate and mug to enjoy the tea and cake.

Good to know



Toilets

Toilets including accessibility toilets are marked on the site map. They can be found on the main camping field and near main Walesby site buildings.



Quiet spaces

If you need a breather, look out for the Hammock Field, Peaceful Gardens, Woodland Trails and the Ember Hive Cosy Corner.



Photography

Photography and filming may take place during the conference. Please let us know if you prefer not to be photographed.



Drinking water

Refill points are located around the site. Please bring a reusable bottle.



Need help?

Look out for volunteers in purple hi-vis or visit Event Control at the Ember Hive.



Everything you need to know before you head home.

Packing up and heading off

The Conference officially closes at 14.30 once the closing ceremony has finished. Before you leave, please check that you have all your belongings and that your space is left tidy for the next people using the site.



Leaving your space well

If you are camping, glamping or staying in a lodge, please leave your area tidy, take all personal belongings and dispose of litter thoughtfully. Check around carefully for tent pegs, rubbish, chargers, cups and anything left behind.

If you have used a fire bowl or designated fire area, please make sure any ash is completely cold and placed in the correct disposal point in the main camping field path. Please dispose of chemical waste and grey waste in the designated Elsan point next to the toilet block on the main camping field.



Campervans - leaving site

Everyone's safety is our top priority. For those wanting to leave before 14.30, please visit the Ember Hive Friday or Saturday to sign up for an appropriate time slot as we will need to make sure we have traffic flow management in place. We have allocated time slots when the majority of delegates will be in attendance at a session. Please keep to the 5mph speed limit at all times and be aware of pedestrians.

Before you go



Take everything with you

Please check tents, lodges, bathrooms, charging points and seating areas for personal belongings.



Dispose of waste thoughtfully

Use either of the two waste and recycling points provided located on the camping and campervan field. Help us leave Walesby looking cared for.



Need help?

If you are unsure about departure arrangements, please ask a volunteer or speak to Event Control.



Thank you

Thank you for being part of Embers: The Power of Play and for helping care for the site.

The Elsan point is located on the main camping field next to the toilet block.



Top tip

Do one last check before you leave — phone chargers and tent pegs are easily missed. And be sure to check lost property in the Ember Hive!!



Travel safely, take the weekend with you and leave your little corner of Walesby better than you found it.



M E N U



FRIDAY

Friday 25 September 2026

DINNER

Served between 6.00pm–8.00pm

Chicken curry

Served with rice and naan bread

GF naan options available.

Vegetable coconut curry

V, VG, DF, GF

Served with rice and naan.

GF naan option available.

A selection of desserts and fresh fruit. Allergens may vary.

Teas, coffees, hot chocolate, cakes and traybakes will be available throughout the weekend in the Ember Hive cafe. Allergens will be catered for and labelled please check with the team before selecting.

ALLERGIES & DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Allergen information available at the serving point. If you have a food allergy, intolerance or dietary requirement, please speak to the catering team before selecting food.





M E N U



SATURDAY

Saturday 26 September 2026

BREAKFAST

Served between 06:30 and 09:00

Full English breakfast: Sausages, bacon, beans, hash browns, tomatoes, mushrooms, egg.

Vegetarian option available

Selection of cereals, fruit and yoghurt

Teas and coffees available

LUNCH

Served between 12.30-14.00

Selection of sandwiches, crisps and cookies.

Homemade soup with roll. GF option available.

DINNER

Served between 18.00-20.00

Beef lasagne, Plant-based lasagne V, VG, DF, GF or macaroni cheese V

Served with chips, salad and garlic bread. GF garlic bread option available.

A selection of desserts and fresh fruit

ALLERGIES & DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Allergen information available at the serving point. If you have a food allergy, intolerance or dietary requirement, please speak to the catering team before selecting food.





M E N U



SUNDAY

Sunday 27 September 2026

BREAKFAST

Served between 06.30 until 09.00

Full English breakfast: Sausages, bacon, beans, hash browns, tomatoes, mushrooms, egg.

Vegetarian option available

Selection of cereals, fruit and yoghurt

Teas and coffees available

LUNCH

Served between 12.30-14.00

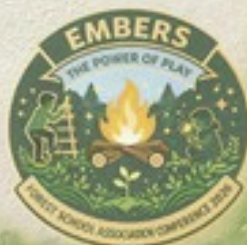
Selection of sandwiches, crisps and cookies.

Homemade soup with roll. GF option available.



ALLERGIES & DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

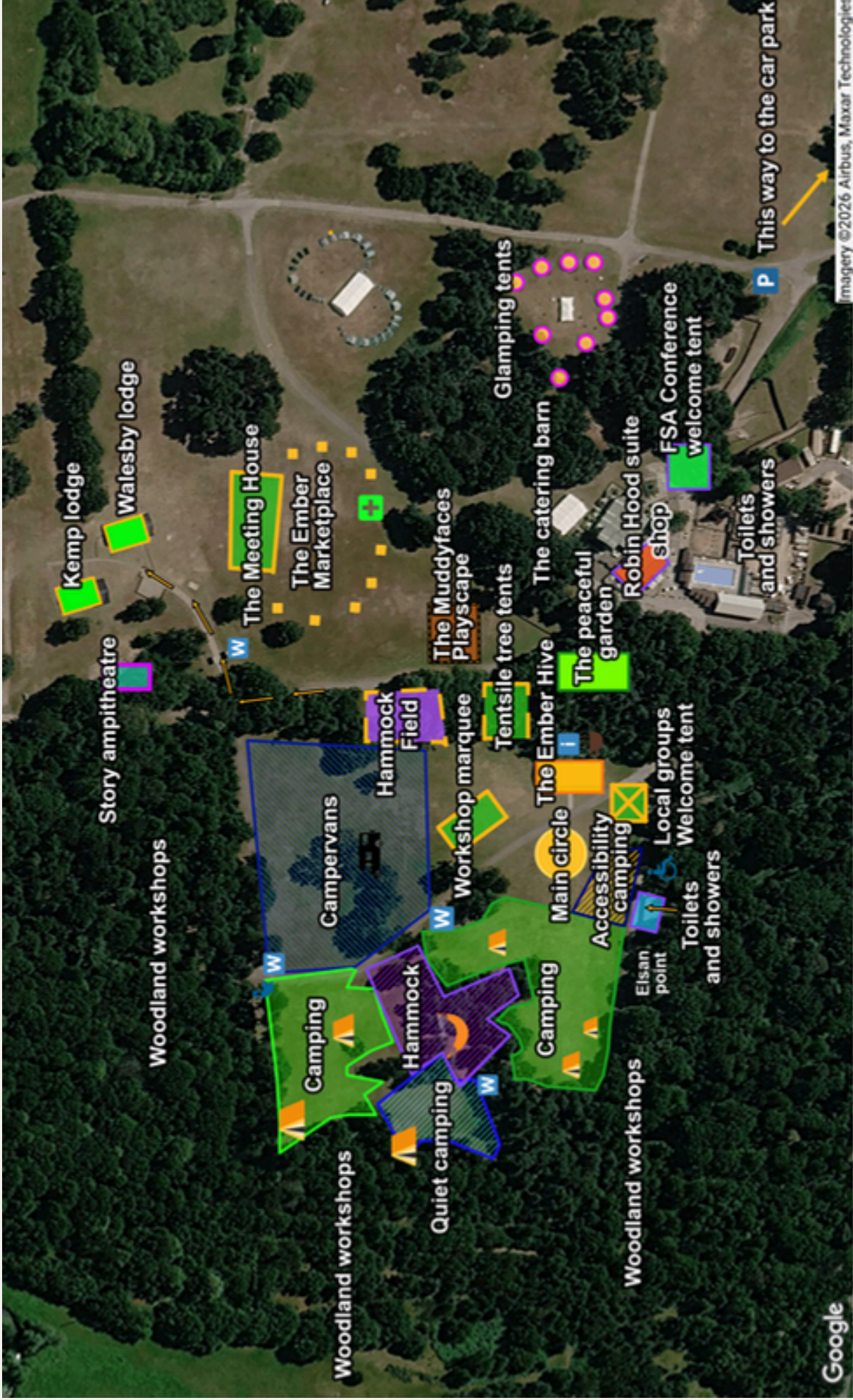
Allergen information available at the serving point. If you have a food allergy, intolerance or dietary requirement, please speak to the catering team before selecting food.



LEGEND

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| ① Kemp Lodge | ⑦ Glamping Tents | ⑬ Tentsile tree tents | ⑲ Camping | 🚻 Toilet |
| ② Walesby Lodge | ⑧ Local Groups Welcome Tent | ⑭ The Peaceful Garden | ⑳ Quiet Camping | ♿ Accessible Toilet |
| ③ Story Amphitheatre | ⑨ Shop | ⑮ The Ember Hive | ㉑ Campervans | 🚿 Shower |
| ④ The Meeting House | ⑩ Robin Hood Suite | ⑯ FSA Conference welcome tent | ㉒ Woodland workshops | 🏠 First Aid |
| ⑤ Muddypaces Playspace | ⑪ The Catering Barn | ⑰ Accessibility Camping | EP Elsan point | 🚑 AED defibrillators |
| ⑥ The Ember Marketplace | ⑫ Hammock Field | ⑱ Workshop marquee | ♻️ Waste point | ♻️ Recycling Points |

WITH WOODLAND



Walesby Forest

Est. 1938

Site Map



Key

Office	Campfire	Zipline
Tented Village	Pool	Fishing
Camping Area	Rifles	Jacobs Ladder
Marquees	Kayaking/Canoeing	3G Swing
Lodges	Rafting	Tomahawk
Caravan Area	Climbing	Body Boarding
Showers	Archery	River Crossing
Toilets	Fencing	Nightline
Picnic Area	Wobble Pole Climb	Frisbee Golf
Shop	Giant Crate Stack	Traverse Wall
Bar	Crate Stack	Giant Catapult
Waste & Recycling	Low Ropes	Team Building
Water Point	Cave Maze	Assault Course
Elsan Point	Leap of Faith	Laser Quest
Electric Point		

	Road/Path
	Camp Area Boundary
	River
	Area of Magnification



WHY PLAY MATTERS

ONE LITTLE WORD. MANY

WAYS OF SEEING

Across these pages, writers, practitioners, researchers and play advocates explore play from different perspectives.

There is no single definition here – and perhaps that is the point.

Together, these writings invite us to think more deeply about what play is, why it matters, what makes it possible and what can get in its way



“Every child has the right to rest,
leisure and play.”

Article 31, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

OUR CONFERENCE THEME – EMBERS: THE POWER OF PLAY



An ember carries heat long after the visible flame has quietened.

It holds potential. It can reignite. It sustains warmth and light.

We chose Embers: The Power of Play as the theme for 2026 because play, like an ember, is so often underestimated — and yet it sits at the very heart of Forest School practice.

For me, play is the warm hug running through Forest School. It is there in curiosity and imagination, in muddy hands and risky adventures, in stories, laughter, making, movement, connection and those wonderfully absorbing moments when a child becomes completely absorbed, in deep flow play in whatever they are doing.

But the space available for meaningful play is under increasing pressure. Children are growing up within worlds shaped by academic demands, technology, changing access to outdoor spaces and fewer opportunities for independence, risk and autonomy.

That makes our conversations about play more important than ever.

Play supports development, relationships, resilience, emotional regulation and wellbeing. But perhaps more importantly, **play does not always need to justify itself by what it produces. Play matters because play matters.**

So The Power of Play is not simply a nostalgic theme. It is an invitation to ask some important questions:



How do we protect space and time for play?
 How do we remain confident in risk-positive practice?
 How do we ensure more children experience nature-connected
 childhoods?

How do we champion play as a right, rather than something
 earned once the “important” work is finished?
 And what role do we, as adults, play in either protecting or
 unintentionally interrupting it?

It has been an extraordinary privilege to bring together so many
 leading voices around these questions for this year’s conference.
 Researchers, playworkers, Forest School practitioners, trainers,
 educators and advocates will not all describe play in exactly the
 same way — and that is part of the richness of this weekend.
 My heartfelt gratitude goes to our keynote speakers, panelists,
 workshop providers, contributors, sponsors, volunteers, FSA team
 and trustees, and to every delegate bringing their own wisdom,
 experience, questions and curiosity to Walesby.

I hope something during this weekend sparks an idea, rekindles
 something you had forgotten, challenges an assumption or
 simply reminds you of the joy of being playful yourself.
 You don’t need to leave with all the answers.
 Carry an ember home. Tend it. Share it.
 And above all...
 Remember to play.

Mimi Eastell
 FSA National Conference Coordinator 2026



“Play shapes the
 brain, opens the
 imagination, and
 invigorates the soul.”

— Stuart Brown, Psychiatrist
 and Founder of the National
 Institute for Play





Play – such a little word

by Dr Sara Knight

FSA Ambassador

Play – such a little word, so very important, so often misunderstood. A bit like Forest School. Maybe we should combine them – Forest Play School. That is what we do, after all. Not just as children: all of us need to play, whether to relax, reset, explore, socialise, etc. And all of us need to be in nature, and for many of us that means we like sharing space with trees.

There are more than 25 definitions of play in the Cambridge Dictionary, noun and verb.

Tracking my activities today, I have played with words and ideas to write this, hoping to communicate my thoughts to you. I have played with my cat, reinforcing our relationship. I have pottered in the garden, playing with plants in a relaxing way. I have been to a play rehearsal, playing to communicate a story (we hope). I have enjoyed the play of light through leaves whilst walking along a wooded lane. Five ways to play in just one part of one average day. I define them all as play as they do have unifying characteristics: there are times during each play event when my focus is deeper and more intense. Sometimes that is transformational (sounds grand, but it might only be in a teeny tiny way), sometimes it distracts me away from the less pleasant parts of life and gives me space to reset.

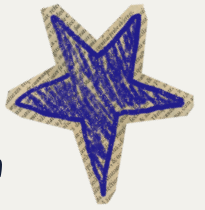
Sometimes.... what does play mean for you?

Tomorrow will be different, with different ways to play – I wonder how many ways each of us will play each week as an ordinary part of our ordinary lives. And coming to the conference is a HUGE opportunity to play, with other people who share many of your interests. So take time to PLAY, to relax, reset, explore, socialize, etc. And the learning and development that will inevitably take place will seep through; sometimes gently, comfortably, and easily, or maybe as a great big transformational WHOOSH! That is the joy of Forest Play School. You just never know....





WHAT IS PLAY?



By Lily Horseman



PLAYING, BEING WELL, AND BELONGING: A REFLECTION

BY DR WENDY RUSSELL

Children's wellbeing is not something they develop or carry inside them as a fixed attribute. It is something that emerges - moment by moment - through their relationships with people, materials, creatures, weather, histories and the wider ecologies they inhabit. Forest School practitioners see this every day. Wellbeing is not delivered to children; it is generated through encounters: the feel of bark under their hands, the exhilaration of climbing, the shared invention of a game, the quiet companionship of sitting beneath a tree.

This way of seeing childhood is profoundly relational. It recognises that children's experiences, choices and capabilities are shaped by the conditions around them. These conditions include the obvious - space, time, materials - but also the less visible: routines, expectations, cultural narratives, adult anxieties, and the wider social and political forces that shape children's everyday lives.

A RELATIONAL CAPABILITY APPROACH

Recently, I carried out, with colleagues Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil, a review of contemporary research into children's play and wellbeing, called 'Playing and Being Well.' In it, we developed what we called A Relational Capability Approach, building on the work of philosophers like Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. A relational Capability Approach sees children's ability to play, and to do and be well, as something that depends both on the resources and opportunities available to them and on their capacity to make use of those opportunities. Play is not something children "choose" in isolation. It is something that becomes possible when the environment, the relationships, the atmosphere and the rhythms of a place open up space for it. A child's capability to play is shaped by:

- the affordances of the landscape
- the presence of loose, responsive materials
- the time available to linger, explore and return
- the emotional climate created by adults
- the cultural expectations around risk, mess and freedom
- the wider social structures that shape children's access to outdoor space.



When these conditions align, children can play in ways that matter to them. And when they can play in ways that matter, they generate their own wellbeing, through joy, absorption, connection, challenge, meaning and delight.

Forest School is rich in these relational conditions. It can offer time that is not rushed, space that is not over-designed, materials that invite imagination, and adults who are responsive rather than directive. These are not small things. They are the foundations of children's capability to play well.

THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF PLAY

It is tempting to justify play by listing its benefits: improved mental health, stronger bodies, better social skills, enhanced learning. All of this is true, but it is not the heart of the matter.

Play is valuable because it is a way of being alive.

Children play for the pleasure of movement, the vitality of raw emotions, the thrill of Risk, the satisfaction of making, the joy of connection, the intensity of imagination. These experiences matter in their own right. They are part of what it means to live a good childhood.

Forest School practitioners witness this intrinsic value daily:

- the deep concentration of a child carving a stick
- the shared excitement of discovering something new
- the vitality of being scared or disgusted by something
- the quiet contentment of tending a fire
- the laughter that erupts unexpectedly.

These moments do not need justification. They are enough.





PLACE AS A PARTNER IN CHILDREN'S WELLBEING

Children's connection to place is central to their ability to play. When children return to the same woodland week after week, they build a relationship with it. They learn its moods, its affordances, its dangers and its possibilities. They come to know where the mud gathers after rain, where the wind whistles, where the best climbing branches are, where the quiet corners lie.

This relationship is practical, sensory, emotional and embodied. It gives children a sense of belonging and competence. It anchors them. And it stands in stark contrast to the shrinking geographies of many children's lives, where traffic, fear, privatised space and adult surveillance limit their freedom to roam.

Forest School restores something essential: the right to inhabit a place with confidence, curiosity and agency. It offers children a landscape that is not merely visited but lived with, a place that shapes them and is shaped by them.

ACCOUNT-ABILITY AND RESPONSE-ABILITY

A Relational Capability perspective brings with it two intertwined responsibilities for adults:

- Account-ability: the ability to notice and understand the conditions that shape children's opportunities to play. This means paying attention to the spatial, temporal, emotional and cultural forces that open up or close down children's play.
- Response-ability: the ability to act in ways that improve those conditions. This includes adjusting our practice, advocating for children's rights to space and time, challenging restrictive norms, and working with others to create more child-friendly environments.

Forest School practitioners already practise both: observing closely, adjusting sensitively, and advocating for children's right to meaningful outdoor experiences. These responsibilities also extend beyond the session: into school policies, community planning, neighbourhood design and the wider cultural narratives that shape children's lives.

Forest School as a practice of relational wellbeing seen through this lens, Forest School is not simply an outdoor learning approach. It is a practice of relational wellbeing. It cultivates the conditions - spatial, temporal, emotional and ecological - that allow children to play well and be well. It honours the intrinsic value of play. It restores children's connection to place. It invites adults into more responsive, attentive ways of being. And it raises a question that sits at the heart of this work:

How might we continue to protect and expand the conditions that allow children to play for the sheer pleasure of it, in places that matter to them, with adults who honour their capabilities?

“DOD YN ÔL AT FY NGHOD” – “TO RETURN TO MY TREES” BY SIÔN EDWARDS

I grew up in what I now realise was an idyllic setting and circumstances. A child of the 90s, my memories of playing out start with me knocking on for my best friend, Ryan, three-doors-down, and spending summer days riding my Raleigh Street Wolf in the comparatively desolate streets. Our circle of friends grew to include other children who gave the Power Rangers of Angel Grove a run for their money, tearing up the streets on our roller skates and skateboards.

Eventually I was allowed further afield to a thicket of bushes and trees at the edge of the estate we called “The Bank” - I assume named after the embankment the trees sat upon. The first time I was asked to “climb the bank”, I pictured myself climbing the sandstone façade of the Midland Bank on Wreccsam High Street. Terrified as I was of the idea, my mum had given her permission and it sounded too grand an adventure to turn down, so I agreed! I can still remember the trepidation of walking towards the trees, and the laughter as the older girls realised my literal interpretation of where we were going!

The meeting place to climb the bank was “The Bars”, named after the maze gates meant to keep motorbikes off the estate. These metal bars were smooth, dark, and shiny from the countless hours spent performing bar rolls or otherwise swinging from the cylindrical bars. Sadly, at some point in the 00s, the council replaced them with square metal bars, stripping away the affordance for play. I can’t say I’ve spent much time there in the past couple of decades, but I can tell you I’ve not seen children congregating there in the way it was once a popular place to do so when I grew up.

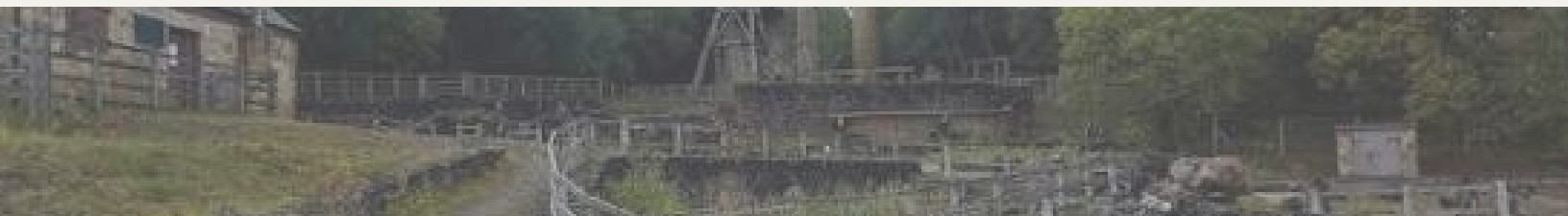


After a few years, Ryan drifted into other interests, and my closest circle became Lorissa from next-door-but-one; Mark and Craig, the sons of my mum’s best friend “Aunty” Barbara; and Samantha Harrington, who lived across the road and would later become the Grace to my Will (IYKYK). Along with a few others, they became my own Stranger Things crew.

And with new friends came new territory. We graduated from “The Bank” to “The Mill” - King’s Mill, to be exact. A Grade II-listed 18th-century agricultural mill marking the eastern end of the Clywedog Valley Trail that winds from Minera Lead Mines through woodland, riverside paths and the parkland of the Erddig Estate - and for us, simply the backdrop to our adventures.

Whilst dodging wasps’ nests, bogs and badger setts, we’d fly over treetops and riverbeds on rope swings and jump from bridges and the crumbling remains of Royal Welsh Fusilier target pits. All the while, we only had each other for company - there were no adults. We’d be out for hours, sometimes so hungry we’d eat the dusty dog biscuits meant only for Sasha the Golden Retriever (you’d be surprised how tasty they are when you’re hungry).

As well as those physical risks, we were taking social risks too. I remember one boy and girl swapping clothes(!) and wearing them all day until we got near home. I remember talking about getting married and having babies - though I was still unsure how that latter part happened. And I remember tales of Edoes: a scary entity that lived in the woods, moved landmarks to confuse you, and could bend time. The 90s answer to Slenderman.



It wasn't until I accidentally started my playwork career in my early 20s that I realised not only how lucky I'd been to have such freedom as a child, but that there were actually adults who made it their business to talk about, explore, and advocate for this thing I'd assumed was just nostalgia. What I had felt as I grew older - that creeping, inescapable, unstoppable melancholy as friends went to different schools, moved to different houses, and our primary focus was no longer running out of the door at the first opportunity to be with one another - started to make sense. This wasn't just sadness about growing up; it was the loss of being in the world in a way that quite literally shapes us.

Reaching the apogee of the ropeswing in Brynycabanau Woods, popping the poppers of the Kappa bottoms as high as you could, and scaring yourself as much as your friends with stories of woodland spirits was not "just" play - it was the architecture of our human development. Those experiences were how our neural pathways formed, how we experimented with our identities, how we learned to navigate risk, fear, courage, and belonging. It wasn't about escaping real-life - it was creating real-life, and it was us teaching ourselves everything we needed, often long before any adult tried to.

Those nights lying on our backs, looking at the stars (and listening to Believe by Cher), we had no idea that the "meaning of life" we were beginning to ponder was actually what we were doing in those moments. Or perhaps we did know, somewhere deep down - and that's why it hurt to go in when our tea was ready, or when it was time to start the tea-bath-homework-bed routine for Monday morning. We were living something precious, and we could feel it slipping away even as we were floating in it.

As playworkers and Forest School practitioners, we occupy a privileged liminal space. We're not children - and we shouldn't pretend to be. Only children can be experts in play. But we can be the guardians of the conditions that make play possible.

We can be wayfarers who know the paths well enough to step aside. We can be the "good enough" adults who hold the boundaries lightly enough for children to push against them. And we can be the defenders of the beauty and seriousness of children's play that, despite adult interpretations, is imperative for the future of our species.

Every time we protect a moment of freedom, choose possibility over prescription, or honour the messy, risky, glorious reality of play, we help children undertake the most important work they will ever do: becoming who they are. And that quiet, radical act of stewardship is our privilege.



Children's play worlds are shrinking - fenced off, risk-managed, timetabled, paved over, or replaced with square bars where round ones once invited movement and gathering. Forest School and playwork stand almost alone in resisting this invasion into children's freedom.

We are not children, but we can be the last line of defence for childhood. They do not need us to teach them how to play; they need adults to get out of their way, and to protect the places where they can play in their own way.

There is a saying in Welsh: "dod yn ôl at fy nghoed" - "to return to my trees". It means to return to a level state of being, to equilibrium. Children should not need to return to their trees - they should never have left!

We, as playworkers and Forest School practitioners, know instinctively the value of returning to our trees - of stepping back from modern pressures, reconnecting with the land, with stillness, with the parts of ourselves that remember what that freedom feels like. And through what we do - playwork and Forest School - we help ensure that children can be among their trees, know their trees, and are not taken from them too soon.

Cofion cynnes,

Siôn



The Power of Play

by Dr Chris Martin

Play is not a luxury
or just for children.
It is too important for that.

Play is children's culture,
and culture came before civilisation.
Play matters a lot.

All sorts of non-human beings play,
from elephants to otters.
We live in their world too.

In play we can think big,
beyond and within our everydays,
beyond the familiar

In play we find joy,
moments of fun and flow
where time seems to disappear.

Play is snot-smeared faces
and bloody knees disregarded,
friendships made for life,
learning how to tell jokes
and negotiate rules.

Play is the root of creativity:
taking the cast-off pieces of the
adult world
and turning them into possibility.

A stick becomes a wand.
A den becomes a world.
Ordinary things are clothed
in dreams not yet dreamt.

And in uncertain times,
when the world feels close to
chaos,
play matters more than ever.

Because every future
first appears in somebody's play.

Through play
we become the future
before we build it.

And that all—
is the power of play.



PLAY

WHY PLAY MATTERS

BY LIZ EDWARDS

“There is little more important in our physical world than earth and water, and they are truly intriguing things—especially when they interact.”

Professor Jan White

These words appear at the beginning of our booklet ‘Making a Mud Kitchen’. They capture, with such simplicity and depth, something profoundly important, yet so often overlooked.

We are now thirteen years on from the start of our “mud campaign”, and the ripple effect of it, in particular the booklet, has been remarkable. Most early years settings now include some form of mud play in their daily provision. At its best, we see rich, exploratory engagement with mud, open-ended materials, child led play and thoughtful facilitation. At the other end, we see twee shop-bought mud kitchens, with less opportunity for expansion of play concepts. Across this spectrum we see interaction with mud which is good.

Children playing outdoors, even in a slightly sanitised version of nature, are still moving, connecting, and experiencing far more than they would sitting sedentary indoors under artificial light. The opportunity, however, is to go deeper, to trust in children’s instinct to explore, create, and immerse themselves fully. To provide rich environments that talk to children. This dialogue, when well supported, knows no bounds in creativity and imagination.

So, the ember I invite you to carry home from this conference is this:

Play is enough.

Play, especially outdoors, offers children most of what they need to be healthy, happy, and to thrive. Leave with confidence that the path you are walking is the right one. The science and research are catching up, providing ever-stronger understanding about what you already know from your own practice, that play is natural, necessary, and enough.

Play well.

Liz Edwards

Founder Muddy Faces & Outdoors Thinking



PLAY BELONGS TO EVERY CHILD

BY AMBER OGUNSANYA-WILLIAM

I grew up in an adventure playground—a place stitched together with laughter, loose parts, wobbling towers and the kind of freedom that makes childhood feel enormous. It was a world where giggles weren't just background noise; they were the soundtrack of becoming. Children built kingdoms out of pallets, invented universes out of tyres, and learned courage from climbing structures that swayed just enough to make your heart skip. Those early days didn't just entertain us; they formed us. They taught me that play is a language, a refuge, and a way of saying to every child: you belong here.

As an adult my work has grown out of that playground soil. I now walk alongside families, practitioners and organisations who are trying to make sure children don't just have play “added on”, but woven into the heart of their everyday lives. In living rooms, school halls, forest clearings and museum galleries, I've watched parents and carers rediscover their own playfulness as they see their children light up. A shared giggle between a child and their grown up can soften worry, rebuild trust and open up conversations that might otherwise feel too hard to start.

Working with different organisations from adventure playgrounds to science centres and museums to literacyimpact

Play belongs to every child. When we honour that we don't just change playgrounds or programmes; we change the story of childhood itself.



Amber Ogunsanya-William, known as Playworker Amber, is an Inclusive Play Consultant, the inaugural NSPCC Champion of Childhood and a UK Playwork Sector Award winner.

Rooted in adventure playgrounds, she champions play as a tool for equity, belonging and transformation, helping communities, cultural institutions and public services embed child-led, rights-based practice. Amber is an elected Director of a national children's play charity and has appeared on the BBC, Good Morning Britain and across national media.

In 2026, she became the first Playworker to bring hands-on play into 10 Downing Street, hosted the launch of the National Play Strategy in Parliament and opened the British Library's Story Explorers exhibition. Her work amplifies children's voices and protects the magic of play wherever childhood happens.



Inclusive play to me means building worlds where no child is left watching from the edges. It means noticing the barriers-inaccessible spaces, riskaverse systems, adult agendas, inequality and choosing to dismantle them. It means creating places where disabled children, neurodivergent children, children from marginalised communities, children who are grieving, children who are quiet, children who are loud all find room for their laughter and their way of being. It's about protecting freely chosen, childled play, even when it looks messy, noisy or unpredictable!

Here is the truth that sits at the centre of my work:

“Play is the quiet revolution happening in every corner of childhood and when adults choose to protect it, they are choosing to protect the part of a child that cannot be rebuilt later.”

I learned who I was on an adventure playground: how to be brave, how to be silly, how to be part of a community, how to fall and get back up, how to imagine wildly. My hope is that every child, in every neighbourhood has somewhere that offers them that same chance a place where their giggles are welcomed their ideas are taken seriously and their right to play is treated as nonnegotiable.

Play belongs to every child. When we honour that we don't just change playgrounds or programmes; we change the story of childhood itself.



WORDS WE CARRY

Thoughts on play from the FSA Staff and Trustees team

We asked members of the FSA staff and Trustee team to share a quotation about play that stays with them. These are some of the words, ideas and provocations that resonate with the people helping steward the FSA.



Emma Briscoe

Deputy Chair,
FSA Trustee

It makes me think about leaving my cares and worries behind and discovering what it truly means to be me. I've experienced this myself through Forest School, and have been privileged enough to see it happen for the wonderful humans who have joined me.

“*And into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul.*”
— John Muir



Lily Horseman

FSA Trustee

It speaks to me of how play can exist in every part of our lives. We don't have to wait for 'playtime'. It also reflects how powerful play feels in our bodies.

“*The opposite of play is not work, the opposite of play is depression.*”
— *Ambiguity of Play*, 2001



Frances Harris

FSA Trustee

We can lose the ability to play because we don't allow ourselves the time or opportunity to play.

“*We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.*”
— George Bernard Shaw



James Trotman

FSA Trustee

“*The true object of all human life is play.*”
— G. K. Chesterton



Mary Maclachlan

FSA Advisor

“We are never more fully alive, more completely ourselves, or more deeply engrossed in anything than when we are playing.”

— Charles Schaefer

Often when we are playing freely with no purpose, we are connecting to ourselves, exploring, imagining, storytelling and trying out our ideas, maybe with others. Stripped of productivity, you find out what pulls your attention when nothing is forcing it.



Nell Seal

FSA Schemes Coordinator

“We don’t stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.”

My mum shared nature wisdom with me from birth and gave me an upbringing in which daily, free play in nature was always an option. Before I began school, I remember her pointing out red campion and foxgloves, telling me nature-inspired stories on walks and showing me how to reach the best blackberries safely.

These experiences gave me a foundation for safe-enough, unsupervised play in nature: making mud pies, collecting elderberries for potions, building obstacle courses from logs, climbing haystacks, pretending sticks were horses and creating elaborate dens in ditches.

I carried on playing in the woods, making dens and climbing, until I was about 14.

After a few exam-heavy fallow years, it all began again at university, and I have been playing in nature ever since: it plays an important part in keeping me grounded and well.



Tilly Hogrebe

FSA Administrator

“Let me play the fool.

With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come”

This quote from William Shakespeare’s “As You Like It” reminds me how important it is to keep the ability to play beyond childhood. To engage in play as an adult gives us permission to leave our social masks behind and embrace our authentic selves through humour and spontaneity.



Richard Smith

FSA Trustee

“It is in our nature to explore, to reach out into the unknown.”

— Sir Ernest Shackleton



PLAY MEMORY WALL

LET'S REMEMBER PLAY

watering the flowers at
nanny's and grandads



p63 We're inviting all our conference delegates, volunteers, workshop providers, sponsors as well as FSA Staff and Trustees to help us create a collective Play Memory Wall at this year's FSA National Conference.

- What's your nature play memory?
- Was there a place you always went to?
- What do you remember most?
- How did it make you feel?

discovering good hiding
spots in the trees



BRING YOUR MEMORY WITH YOU

Bring a photo, a few words, a story, a drawing — or simply come and add your memory when you arrive- supplies provided. This will be located in The Meeting House.

THE WEEKEND

YOUR WEEKEND. YOUR WAY.

- The Conference schedule
- Keynote: Siôn Edwards
- Saturday Panel – Why Play Matters
- Keynote: Dr Chris Martin
- Sunday Panel – The Future Landscape of Play
- People & Connection
- Play & Celebration
- Pause & Restore
- Opening Ceremony
- Ember Hive
- Research Hub
- Bookstall & Book swap
- Metre Market
- Share Your Talent
- Storytelling Fire
- Quiz
- Ceilidh
- Conference Raffle





FRIDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER 2026

16.00	FSA Conference Opens
18.00-18.30	Lone Travellers and New Delegates meet up in Robin Hood Suite With Matt Harder, Chair of the FSA
18.00-20.00	Dinner in the Catering Barn
20.00	Opening Ceremony on the Main Field with Chris Salisbury and Elena Harris
20.30-21.30	Stories by Fire and Moonlight at the Storytelling Ampitheatre With Chris Salisbury
20.30-21.30	Share Your Talent in the Meeting House
20.30-22.00	Evening Craft-Along in the Ember Hive



SATURDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2026

**06.30-
09.00**

Breakfast in the Catering Barn

**07.30-
08.15**

Early Morning Warrior Yoga with Mary Maclachlan

09.00

Keynote Address "dod yn ôl at fy nghoed" - Return to Our Trees
With Siôn Lewis Edwards



09.30

Panel discussion "Why Play Matters!"
With guest speakers



**10.30-
12.30**

Workshop 1



Tea, coffee and cake will be available outside the Meeting House



The Meeting House



SATURDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2026

**12.30-
14.00**

Lunch in the Catering Barn

**13.00-
14.00**

FSA Recognised Provider Lunchtime
Meet-Up
in Robin Hood Suite

**13.30-
14.00**

FSA Conference Raffle at The Ember
Marketplace

**14.00-
14.25**

The Metre Market at The Ember
Marketplace

**14.30-
16.30**

Workshop 2

**16.45-
17.15**

Researchers Meet-Up in the Ember
Hive Cafe



SATURDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2026

**17.15-
18.15**

Connect with your local community
The Meeting House

**18.00-
20.00**

Dinner in the Catering Barn

20.00

Matt's Legendary Quiz in the Robin Hood Suite

**20.30-
22.30**

Kettlehawk Ceilidh Band in The Meeting House

**20.30-
22.30**

Evening Craft-Along in the Ember Hive

SCHEDULE

SCHEDULE



SUNDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER 2026

**06.30-
09.00**

Breakfast in the Catering Barn

**07.30-
08.15**

Early Morning Warrior Yoga with Mary Maclachlan

09.00

Keynote Address "Embers of Possibility: (Re)Positioning Play and the Outdoors within Technologically Mediated Childhoods With Dr Chris Martin



09.45

Panel Discussion "The Future Landscape of Play" With guest speakers



**10.30-
12.30**

Workshop 3



Tea, coffee and cake will be available outside the Meeting House



The Meeting House



SUNDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER 2026

**12.30-
13.30**

Lunch in the Catering Barn

13.30

In Conversation with Eugene Minogue
From Strategy to Action: Shaping the
Future of Play in England
With Eugene Minogue and Matt Harder



14.30

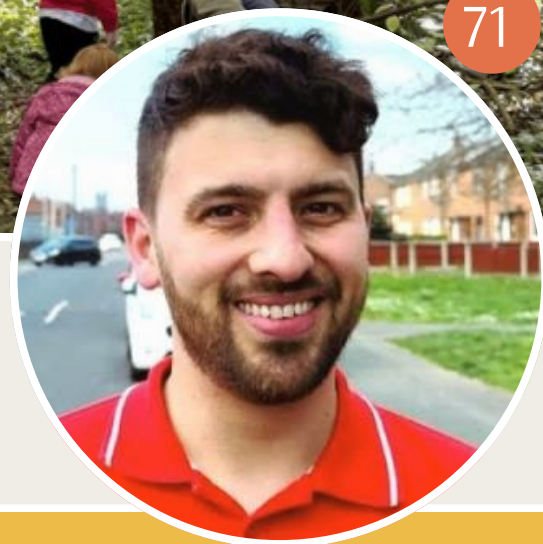
Closing Ceremony
with Chris Salisbury and Elena Harris



Robin Hood Suite

KEYNOTE SPEAKER OVERVIEW

SIÔN EDWARDS

Playworker | Youth Worker | Chair of The Playwork Foundation

BIOGRAPHY

Siôn Lewis Edwards is a seasoned playworker and youth worker and current Chair of The Playwork Foundation.

Across his career, Siôn has worked to champion children's right to play and the conditions that allow play to flourish. In recent years, his work has increasingly brought him to the intersections of playwork, Forest School and therapeutic childcare — exploring the common ground between practices that place children's rights, agency, relationships and lived experience at their heart.

His work invites us to look beyond professional boundaries and consider what becomes possible when those working alongside children recognise their shared responsibilities.

At a time when children's opportunities for freely chosen play, time outdoors and autonomy are increasingly under pressure, Siôn brings a playwork perspective to some of the most important conversations facing our communities.

SATURDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2026**09.00 AM IN THE MEETING HOUSE**

**RETURN TO OUR TREES:
RECLAIMING A SHARED FUTURE FOR
PLAYWORK AND FOREST SCHOOL**

Drawing on practice, research and lived experience, Siôn explores the relationship between Forest School and playwork — two distinct traditions sprouting from similar roots and values, and both challenging convention for decades.

He asks what our sectors can learn from one another, what we share in the challenges we face, and why our common cause makes working together more important than ever.

Inspired by the Welsh phrase “dod yn ôl at ein coed” — return to our trees — this keynote is an invitation to reconnect with our shared roots, challenge assumptions and strengthen our collective commitment to children, community and the future.

SCAN ME*Links to his work:*

KEYNOTE SPEAKER OVERVIEW

DR CHRIS MARTIN

*Playworker | Researcher | Advocate for
Children's Right to Play*

**BIOGRAPHY**

Chris is a playworker, writer-researcher, and playwork activist. His PhD examines intra-actions between children and mobile digital technologies in outdoor play. He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) and has published and presented academic and professional papers in the UK and internationally. He also works face-to-face at Tiverton Adventure Playground.

Chris was Chair of the International Play Association (England) and represented England on the IPA World Council until 2025. He is a member of the PlayRights Editorial Board. He was the lead writer and project lead for the UK Play and Playwork Education and Skills Strategy (2011–2016), facilitated the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Play, and was National Playwork Convenor for the Community, Youth and Playworkers' Section of Unite the Union.

**SUNDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER
2026 KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**09.00 AM IN THE MEETING
HOUSE**

**EMBERS OF POSSIBILITY:
(RE)POSITIONING PLAY AND THE
OUTDOORS WITHIN
TECHNOLOGICALLY MEDIATED
CHILDHOODS**

As children's worlds become increasingly shaped by both technology and nature, Chris Martin invites us to reconsider the role of play in contemporary childhood. Drawing on research, policy and practice, this keynote explores how everyday playful moments can nurture agency, connection and possibility, challenging us to reflect on how Forest School can help shape the future of play.

SCAN ME



Links to his work:

SATURDAY + SUNDAY

TWO CONVERSATIONS. ONE THREAD

Across the weekend, two panel discussions will explore the question at the heart of this year's conference: What does it take for play to flourish? On Saturday, Why Play Matters begins with the foundations – asking why play is fundamental to childhood, what children experience and discover through play, and why the conditions that make meaningful play possible need protecting.



Our Panel Host
Lily Horseman
FSA Trustee

On Sunday, The Future Landscape of Play carries that conversation forward. As children's worlds change, what must we protect, what might we need to rethink, and how can we help create a future in which play doesn't simply survive, but thrives? Together, the conversations reflect the story of Embers: first understanding and tending the fire of play, then considering how we carry those embers forward into practice, education, research, policy and communities.

SATURDAY

WHY PLAY MATTERS

Why does play matter – and why does protecting it matter now?



SUNDAY

THE FUTURE LANDSCAPE OF PLAY

How do we ensure play doesn't merely survive, but thrives?

SATURDAY 26 SEPTEMBER | 09:30–10:25

Location: The Meeting House

WHY DOES PLAY MATTER – AND WHY DOES PROTECTING IT MATTER NOW?

Play can appear ordinary. Yet within it sit agency, relationship, movement, creativity, challenge, discovery, belonging and joy.

This opening conversation brings together voices from Forest School, playwork, early childhood, research, schools, training and outdoor learning to consider what children are really doing when they play – and what they need from the adults, environments and communities around them for genuine play to flourish. Rather than viewing play simply as an activity, teaching strategy or route to an outcome, the panel asks us to consider its value as something fundamental to childhood.

INTRODUCING THE PANEL MEMBERS:



JON CREE

Forest School • Nature Pedagogy

Forest School pioneer, trainer, author and founding director of the FSA. Jon brings decades of experience exploring play, risk, learner agency and nature connection.



Sion Edwards

Playwork

Chair of the Playwork Foundation, Siôn champions children's right to self-directed play and is a passionate advocate for the Playwork Principles and for recognising play as a fundamental part of children's lives.



Liz Edwards

Muddy Faces • Outdoor Thinking Ltd

Co-founder of Muddy Faces, Liz brings a practical perspective on how simple materials, environments and everyday opportunities can support rich, creative outdoor play.



Mell Harrison

FSA Endorsed Trainers • Practice

An FSA Endorsed Trainer, Mell brings insight into how practitioners learn to step back, trust the process and create more genuinely learner-led Forest School experiences.



Dr Frances Harris

Research • Inclusion • Forest School

Researcher and FSA Trustee Frances brings an evidence-informed perspective on Forest School, inclusion and recognising different ways of playing.



Cath Prisk

Outdoor People • OPAL Mentor

Cath works with schools and communities to make meaningful outdoor play part of everyday life and brings a strong perspective on whole-setting culture and systemic change.



Professor Jan White

Early Childhood • Outdoor Play

Jan is a leading writer and advocate for outdoor play in early childhood, with a particular focus on movement, natural materials and rich self-directed experiences.



SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER | 09:45–10:25

Location: The Meeting House

THE FUTURE LANDSCAPE OF PLAY

How do we ensure play doesn't merely survive, but thrives?

Children's worlds are changing – technologically, socially, educationally and environmentally.

This future-facing conversation brings together perspectives from Forest School, research, play, training, outdoor learning and sector development to explore both the challenges and possibilities ahead.

Rather than treating change only as a threat, the panel asks what needs protecting, what may need to evolve and what role our communities can play in creating a future where meaningful play remains possible for every child.

INTRODUCING THE PANEL MEMBERS:



JON CREE

Forest School • Nature Pedagogy

Forest School pioneer, trainer, author and founding director of the FSA. Jon brings decades of experience exploring play, risk, learner agency and nature connection.



Liz Edwards

Muddy Faces • Outdoor Thinking Ltd

Co-founder of Muddy Faces, Liz brings a practical perspective on how simple materials, environments and everyday opportunities can support rich, creative outdoor play.



Menna Godfrey

Forest School • Nature Pedagogy

Menna's work invites us to slow down, notice more closely and recognise the richness of children's curiosity and child-led outdoor experience.



Dr Chris Martin

Researcher • Play Activist • Playworker

Chris researches changing childhoods and technologically mediated play, challenging simple oppositions between children's digital and outdoor worlds.



Sarah Lawfull

FSA Endorsed Trainer • Practice

Sarah brings extensive experience of Forest School training and professional development, asking how practice can evolve while remaining rooted in its principles.



Cath Prisk

Outdoor People • OPAL Mentor

Cath works with schools and communities to make meaningful outdoor play part of everyday life and brings a strong perspective on whole-setting culture and systemic change.

SATURDAY ASKS...

Why does play matter?

- What did play give us?
- What does it give children now?
- What makes play possible?
- What gets in its way?
- What role should adults play?
- Why must it be protected?



UNDERSTAND



PROTECT



REIMAGINE



ACT

Reflection:

LISTEN. QUESTION. CARRY IT FORWARD.

Something I heard on Saturday that stayed with me...

A question I want Sunday's panel to explore...

One thing I want to carry into my practice...

The future of play depends on...

SUNDAY ASKS...

What future do we want for play?

- What are we in danger of losing?
- What is changing?
- What gives us hope?
- What must Forest School protect?
- What might we need to rethink?
- What can we do about it?

COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

The conference is as much about the people you meet as the sessions you attend. Find your community, share experiences, start conversations and make connections that continue long after the weekend.



Throughout
the weekend



Community
Hub

The Ember Hive

One of the social hearts of the conference. Drop in throughout the weekend for tea, conversation, FSA information, the Spotlight Wall, sponsor stalls and the unexpected exchanges that often become the most valuable parts of a conference.



Saturday 26 September |
17:15–18:15



The Meeting House

CONNECT WITH YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Meet Forest School practitioners from across the UK, make local connections, share experiences and help shape local and national FSA activity.



Friday from 4pm
and Saturday
morning



Local Groups
Welcome Tent

FSA Affiliated Local Groups

Discover the Forest School community closer to home. Meet Local Group representatives from across the UK, find your nearest group and hear about local meet-ups, skills shares, CPD, camps-outs and opportunities to connect throughout the year. Add a marker to the 'Where Are You From?' map.



Research Meet-Up

Ember Hive

Saturday 26 September | 16:45–17:15

Interested in research or simply curious about the evidence developing around Forest School? Connect with researchers, practitioners and others keen to strengthen the relationship between research and practice.



CONNECT

SHARE

BELONG



SUPPORTING OUR FOREST SCHOOL RESEARCH COMMUNITY

78

Research matters. It helps strengthen practice, inform training, support advocacy and build the evidence that helps Forest School continue to grow.

RESEARCH AREA IN THE EMBER HIVE

This year we are creating a dedicated Forest School Research Area in the Ember Hive — a space for researchers and delegates to discover, share and connect around current Forest School research. The notice boards will showcase research posters, invitations to surveys, updates on findings and links to papers, helping our wider community engage with and contribute to the evidence surrounding Forest School.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Strong research gives practitioners, organisations and funders something credible to refer to when making the case for Forest School. It can influence training, inform resources such as the Forest School Handbook, support Level 3 training and help strengthen future funding applications.



RESEARCH MEET-UP

Saturday 26 September | 16:45–17:15
Ember Hive Community Café

Join Wem Southerden and others interested in Forest School research for an informal meet-up and conversation. Whether you are an established researcher, currently studying, developing a project or simply curious, you are warmly welcome.

We hope this will be a living space for curiosity, conversation and connection — helping researchers share what they are discovering while giving our community the opportunity to engage with and support Forest School research.



RESEARCH IN ACTION

Forest School research does more than add to academic knowledge. It helps build the evidence base that can support funding bids, programme development, training, publications, policy conversations and advocacy.

Across the UK and internationally, funded research projects are exploring questions around:

- children's play, wellbeing and development
- nature connection and outdoor learning
- practitioner experience and professional practice
- inclusion, access and participation
- education, health and community outcomes
- the long-term impact of Forest School approaches

The Research Area will highlight examples of current and completed projects, including funded studies, emerging findings and opportunities for the Forest School community to contribute to ongoing research.

Research and writing on Forest School, environmental education, gender and neurodiversity



◀ Paper (open access):

'Sometimes there are rules about what girls can do': a rights-based exploration of primary-aged children's constructions of gender in Forest School.



FOREST SCHOOLS
THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE



Also in Brundrett, M., Malone, E., & Rowley, A. (Eds.). (2025). *Forest Schools: The Research Evidence*. Taylor & Francis. ▶



Chapters:

Trees, bees and girls with muddy knees: What can an awareness of gender offer Forest School educators?

Stopping to smell the wild garlic: the significance of neurodiversity for environmental education



From: Glackin, M., Hine, S., & Perry, S. (2023; 2024). *Heartwood (Vol. 1 & 2): Voices from environmental education: Academic research meets head, heart and hands*. King's College London.

(Free downloads here) ▶



Forthcoming PhD thesis (2027): Forest School as environmental education: an ecofeminist exploration of its potential to support socioecological justice



Shirin Hine
PhD student
School of Education, Communication and Society
King's College London
shirin.hine@kcl.ac.uk

Loughborough University PhD research

MOTIVATION AND NEURODIVERGENCE WITHIN THE FOREST SCHOOL WORKFORCE



If you are a Forest School practitioner, I would value your participation in this research.

I am conducting research into the prevalence of neurodivergence in the Forest School workforce, the motivations for choosing to work in Forest School, and how Forest School practice may support wellbeing and the satisfaction of psychological needs.



TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE



10 MINUTES



ANONYMOUS



*Scan here
to take part!*



GIRLS BETWEEN THE TREES

Doctoral Research by Hannah Myers, Loughborough University,
h.k.myers@lboro.ac.uk. Supervised by Janine Coates and Helena Pimlott-Wilson

The
influence of Forest School
on primary aged girls' perceptions
of (invisible) girlhood

Despite developments in gender equity through history there is still a version of femininity that is wrapped up in niceness, quietness and humility, which contrast with boldness and confidence we associate with men and boys. These characteristics - the sugar and spice and all things nice - are expertly cultivated in mainstream schools, where compliments like 'she's no trouble at all' are rife and highlight that part of a girl's value is in her compliance. It strikes me that these girls, who are consistently celebrated for not taking up space in the classroom or demanding their deserved attention, might not be the ones making history. My research looks at Forest School programmes operating in mainstream primary schools, whether they can shake up this stereotypical way to 'do' girlhood, which I'm exploring using ethnographic and creative methods.



"So, what does it feel
like in Forest School?"
"Forest School, open the
door [...] freedom"
Human, year 5



To illustrate my preliminary findings I'm going to tell you about Hei Hei. She's 6 years old, and (to quote *The Lion Inside*) is the littlest, shyest, meekest mouse. In the classroom she stays still in her seat, does what she's told and barely makes a sound. She later told me that she doesn't like to smile in school, she's too shy. But at Forest School she not only smiles, she beams. She doesn't only move, she leaps, climbs the tree and jumps down. She doesn't only speak, she tells the most dominant boy what to do, all while playing with mud, water, slugs, snails and maybe even a few puppy-dogs' tails. At Forest School, she's not being a 'good girl', but she doesn't have to be.

Circle time at forest school: shared practice or pluralistic concept?

Selima Negro and “Educare nel bosco” Canalescuola

The context and the participants

"Educare nel bosco" is a network of Forest Kindergartens promoted by the social cooperative Canalescuola that started in 2015 and it now comprises 21 projects in different regions in Italy. In 2025 the network identified the need to strengthen its pedagogical identity and renew the awareness of its core values. As one of the steps that have been taken toward this goal, a study has been launched on "circle time", which is both a very common practice across the network and an element that often brings out different perspectives and sensibilities between facilitators (Gans 1998).

The approach: emergent research

A team of 20 Forest School practitioners volunteered to be part of the research. We build together the research design **step by step**, in line with the approach of the emergent curriculum (Negro, 2019). We started to work with different methods, from autobiography to ethnographic **observation**, from **focus groups** to **interviews**, to identify elements of "circle time" that are relevant for each facilitator, trying to reflect the diversity of experiences and views of each practionioners involved in each project (Biesta 2019).

The hidden research

This research is not actually about circle time: the undercurrent objective has been to create an occasion to reflect on **implicit pedagogies** and to experiment **reflective tools** that could deepen the capacity for sharing meaningful conversations about the ethos of forest school within the network. The underlying question that shaped this experience has been: how do we nurture our **researcher attitude** in everyday practice as forest school educators?

Irene Corazza: "For quite some time we had been reflecting on the fact that the idea of the circle we had developed no longer felt sufficient. I sensed a degree of artificiality: for some children the circle is something they miss when it is absent, while for others it represents an interruption."

Ilaria Simonetti: "I've really enjoyed how, lately, our opening circle has turned into a "snack circle": a musical moment followed by a time when everyone sits in a circle, eating their snack, as part of our routine. However, even in this context, I sometimes sense a rigidity and a sense of imposition that I feel are more tied to an adult perspective and need than to the children's actual needs."

The problem

When the limitations of circle practice are not made explicit and brought into awareness, there is a risk that the potential of this tool will be lost because facilitating it becomes a **performance**, a duty, a task to be carried out and completed, thereby losing its educational intentionality. Even when circle time takes place every day and follows a similar pattern, it is unlikely ever to repeat itself in exactly the same way. Like everything in the forest, it moves through **different phases and transformations** and **responds to the group and the place**. Tools are needed to recognise what is happening within the circle and, where necessary, to change the adult's stance in relation to it.

The questions

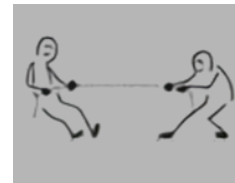
We started with two (simple?) questions:

- Can we describe "circle time" as a core element of the **pedagogical identity** of the network?
- Why does it **not always work** as expected?

Exploring phase

At the beginning of our research we identified a central problem: **defining what "circle time" is** has not been as straightforward as expected. Under the label "circle time" **different experiences and expectations** have emerged, not completely explicit or clear in their differences.

"The circle has a profound meaning of equality: neither first nor last, but all together.""



"Like any tool, it must be used with wisdom. Like any instrument, it must be tuned."

Marco Marcassa: "The tension between symbol and tool might be resolved if we recognise that circles make use of educational tools (practices) that originally emerged in response to clearly identified needs. Over time, however, communities grow and change, and we may find ourselves continuing to use tools that have become disconnected from the particular community in front of us."

We identified some aspects that were under represented in the explicit narratives about circle time that were shared in the initial phase:

- Do we need a **dynamic assessment of risks** at circle time?
- How many **functions** does circle time have and how should it change depending on the specific objective?
- How much weight do **material and place-related** aspects have at circle time?

Mapping phase

We started to observe circle time in everyday situations at forest school, and we found that **practitioner would describe as “circle time” different situations** that had different characteristics and functions. For example, we identified three forms of circle time that are context-dependent categories and shouldn't be considered fixed or mutually exclusive models:

Spontaneous circle time



Special circle time



Routine circle time



Annalisa Silvanini: “I noticed that whenever a group of people gathers, spontaneous circles often seem to form. From an anthropological perspective, is there an innate tendency to arrange ourselves in a circle?”

Maddalena Scalabrin: “The special circle is not intended to interrupt the discussion; rather, it gives it a more explicit form. It also makes it easier for other people to take part—those who may have moved away or were not originally present but whom the adult believes it would be helpful to involve.”

Giovanni Iagher: “Circle practice is shaped by what each of us brings to it: our limitations, our ideas and our experiences.”

Conclusion

Preliminary findings suggest that circle time is a **multifaceted concept**, shaped by different understandings of **communication, community, boundaries** and the **role of adults** in Forest School settings. Rather than being treated as a prescribed practice with intrinsic value, circle time should be **continually examined and adapted** as part of the broader reflective process underpinning Forest School practice.

Francesca Domenichella: “I believe this work has given us a great opportunity to reflect and then finally express without ambiguity what each of us thinks about circle time as a routine.”

Serena Olivieri: “This research on circle time has opened up so many questions, and this is always the value of any research.”

Irene Corazza: “This journey has profoundly changed my educational posture, giving me greater flexibility and ability to deconstruct.”

Francesco Predieri: “For me, the facilitator's stance within the circle contrasts with the stance I've been trying to deconstruct in recent years as a forest school practitioner.”

Serena Olivieri: “The circle is not treated as a technique, but as a relational event: what matters is not determining whether it “works”, but rather understanding what processes it brings to light, what categories it activates, and what tensions it gives shape to.”

Eleonora Bovo: “Belonging risks becoming a constraint. The moment you no longer feel at ease, you become constrained by the form or structure itself. Participation—if it is genuinely meaningful and valued—must be voluntary.”

Annalisa Silvanini: “I realized, once again, how essential it is to never stop questioning educational practices.”

Marco Marcassa: “It was powerful to step outside fixed definitions and transcend the 'defined vs. indefinite' duality to find a broader way to read the present.”

Bibliography

- Biesta, G. (2025). *La ricerca educativa. Un'introduzione non ortodossa*. [Educare Research: An Unorthodox Introduction]. Anicia
- Gans, C. (2019). *Forest Schooled, the book. Stories linking one Practitioner's Forest School Experience with theories and research on education, child development, and general human nature*. Independently published.
- Negro, S. (2019). *La pedagogia del bosco. Educare nella natura per crescere bambini liberi e sani*. Terra Nuova Edizioni.

Dr Jo Hume

Researcher, Lecturer in Initial Teacher Education. Forest School L3 Practitioner.

Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne.



My research and practice explore Forest School as a site where learning is produced with the forest site itself, not simply upon it. I examine how woods, weather and materials actively shape play, positioning place itself as a participant in the pedagogical encounter, rather than a passive setting children move through.

The theoretical lens

Posthuman new materialism

Intra-action

More-than-human agency

Relational mapping

These ideas ask what changes when we stop treating a Forest School site as scenery and start reading it as something that co-produces the session alongside the children, the practitioner, the weather and the materials at hand. I am interested in what is gained—and what is genuinely difficult—about moving beyond human-centred research frameworks, including non-linear time and place-memory, intra-action, and the agency of trees, mud and materials. I use embodied research methods to explore what I have defined as the “three Fs of Forest School” (Frequency, Familiarity and Freedom) to show how the elements that make up Forest School combine into something more powerful than the sum of their parts.

Playing with Place — my session at this conference

A walking, slow-looking and reflective session exploring how this venue's own ground, light and weather actively shape the play that happens in it. I share theory and ideas that practitioners can take back to their own settings.

My book

Theorising the Quiet Power of Forest School

Routledge, 2026.

A full account of the framework behind my session — how time, space, materials and more-than-human others actively shape what forest school becomes.

Get in touch

I'm always glad to talk about this work, hear how it might impact practice, or discuss collaboration.

- Find me at the conference, or email:
- joanna.hume@northumbria.ac.uk
- Northumbria University, School of Communities and Education.



My research

Publications & academic profile



The book

Theorising the Quiet Power of Forest School



Playing with Place

A blog post about my research methods

Journeys Through Forest School: A Model for Understanding Diverse Educational Experiences of Children

ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION
RESEARCH (2025) |
DOI:
10.1080/13504622.2025.2529544

DR FRANCES HARRIS

INTRODUCTION

This poster draws together research exploring Forest School practitioners' perspectives on the significance of the outdoor learning space; what children learn at Forest School; and how children responded to Forest School sessions, to propose a model of how and why this pedagogical approach is effective across a range of children. The article suggests that children's ability to choose their own activities, coupled with the child-led ethos, and the more permissive outdoor learning space allow children to engage with and respond to forest school according to their own developmental needs. Further, the model considers how the combination of individual children's learning journeys come together so that, collectively, the whole class benefits.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on interviews with practitioners to concerning

- The significance of taking children from the classroom to an outdoor learning space; Practitioners' perspectives of what children learn at forest school;
- How children respond to Forest School sessions;

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) identified recurring patterns across practitioner accounts to develop a grounded theoretical model of individual learning journeys. This research focussed on children as learners within a Forest School setting, and seeks to understand children's learning in this environment to provide a greater understanding of how different children are impacted by forest school.

KEY FINDINGS

The outdoor learning space within a Forest School offers three key freedoms: physical space (novel, larger, seasonally changing), behavioural space (tolerates noise, movement, stimulating, solitude), and curriculum space (released from national curriculum demands, enabling child-led, intrinsic motivation).

Practitioners' views of learning at Forest School highlighted the development of relationships with nature and others (most common), social & language skills, physical & bushcraft skills, responsibility & risk, self-esteem, sensory & discovery learning. Only 6 of 20 practitioners mentioned curriculum links.

Children's Responses to Forest School varied: "It touches people differently". Key themes identified included (1) Overcoming shyness & building confidence, (2) Encouraging communication, (3) Calming anxious children, (4) Improving behaviour & focus, (5) Engaging disaffected learners, (6) Encouraging cultural & social integration.

THE MODEL: INDIVIDUAL LEARNING JOURNEYS

The model presents three interconnected columns:

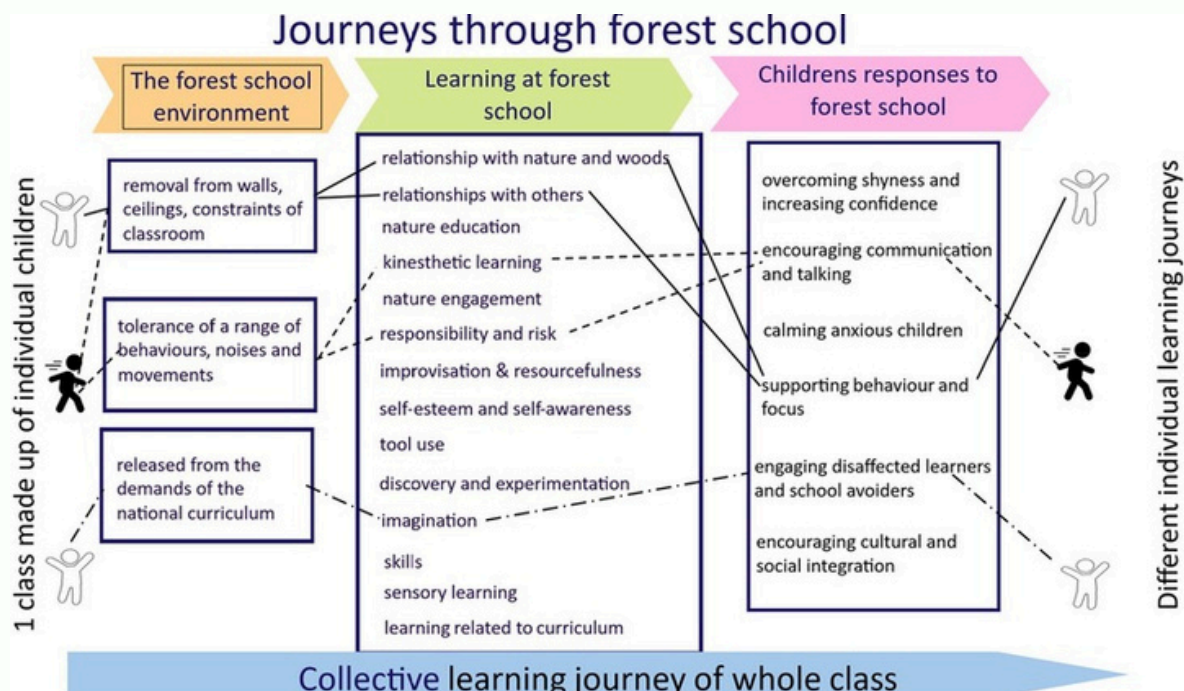
Column 1 - The Outdoor learning space

Column 2 - Learning at Forest School

Column 3 - Children's Responses

Three pathway lines (solid, dashed, dot-dash) illustrate that each child navigates the framework differently. A collective arrow shows the whole-class benefit.

Conclusion: Child choice + permissive outdoor space + child-led ethos = engagement aligned to developmental needs. Each child benefits uniquely; collectively the whole class is transformed.



Children's individual learning journeys at Forest School. Each child will take advantage of different affordances offered by the outdoor learning environment, chose to engage with different areas of learning while at forest school, and respond in different ways depending on their individual characters and abilities. Lines indicate potential choices made by 3 different children.

COMMUNITY & CONNECTION



Celebrate & discover our community



Meet, connect & feel welcome



Stronger together in Forest School



Throughout the weekend

FSA Spotlight Wall

Explore the FSA Spotlight Wall celebrating the people, projects and communities that make up the Forest School Association network. Discover Local Groups, Endorsed Trainers, Recognised Providers and research displays — a great place to browse, connect and be inspired.

The Ember Hive



Friday 25 September | 18:00–18:30

Lone Traveller & New Delegate Meet-Up

Coming on your own or new to conference? Join us for a relaxed and friendly gathering before the weekend begins. Meet fellow delegates, make connections and start your conference feeling welcomed and supported.

Robin Hood Suite



Saturday 26 September | 13:00–14:00

Recognised Provider Meet-Up

A dedicated gathering for FSA Recognised Forest School Providers to meet one another, share experiences and strengthen the network of organisations delivering Forest School provision aligned with the six principles.

Robin Hood Suite

EMBERS

EMBER MARKETPLACE



Visit the Ember Marketplace for interactive woodcraft demonstrations, shopping, raffle announcements, the Metre Market and a lovely mix of stalls and activities for all to enjoy throughout the weekend.



WHAT YOU'LL FIND



Interactive woodcraft demonstrations



Opportunities to purchase resources and outdoor learning essentials



Raffle announcements and the raffle prize stall



The fast-paced Metre Market



Sponsor stalls and conference offers



The Muddy Faces Playscape: move through play

MARKETPLACE HIGHLIGHTS

MUDDYFACES

Forest School and outdoor learning products, tools for equipment, shelters and seating, health and safety supplies, practical kits and resources. Conference delegates receive 10% off all purchases.

Peritia Training

Forest School, Outdoor and Paediatric First Aid courses. First Aid kits and supplies, the Forest School First Aid book. Conference offers include a waterproof first aid kit and first aid book.

Drop-in woodcraft

Carve your own Gypsy Flower with Rustic Tim using shave horses, hazel wood and draw knives. Or explore different woodcraft projects and tools with the Out in the Sticks team. No booking required – just drop in!

All of our amazing Sponsors

Tentsile tree tents (with a woodland spot to try them out), ITC First, Coventry Outdoors, AIM Qualifications, Birnbeck Insurance, Act First Aid supplies, and Mark Herring / Out in the Sticks Forest School interactive woodcraft demonstrations.

Visit the raffle prize stall to browse the fabulous prizes donated by our amazing sponsors.





THE METRE MARKET

A fast-paced FSA Conference tradition! Bring handmade creations, second-hand tools, natural finds or woodland treasures to sell, swap or barter. Everything must fit on your own 1m x 1m cloth and be carried into the market in one trip. Come ready to haggle, hunt for bargains and see what treasures you take home!



SATURDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2026 | AT 14.00-14.25
📍 The Ember Marketplace

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Slow down, breathe deeply, and enjoy simple moments that nourish body, mind, and spirit.



Rest in nature.

The Hammock Field

Need a moment to pause, breathe and simply be? Tucked away from the bustle of the conference, the Hammock Field offers a peaceful retreat where delegates can rest, regulate and reconnect with themselves. Whether you choose to sway gently beneath the trees, enjoy a quiet conversation, read a book, journal or simply listen to the sounds of the woodland, this space has been created with wellbeing and restoration in mind



Breathe. Stillness. Quiet.

The Peaceful Gardens

Tucked away from the busier parts of the conference, the Peaceful Gardens offer a gentle place to pause, breathe and reset. Come here for a few quiet moments between sessions, to sit with a cup of tea, reflect on the day, spend time alone or simply notice the woodland around you. There is no expectation to do anything — this is a space to slow down, regulate, rest and return to the weekend in your own time.



Create together. Unwind well.

Evening Craft-Alongs

On both Friday and Saturday evenings, the Gathering Space will host a selection of gentle Craft Along Sessions. Some sessions will offer light guidance, while others will provide open-ended opportunities to make, create and experiment at your own pace.



WEEKEND WELLBEING SUPPORT



EARLY MORNING WARRIOR YOGA AND WEEKEND WELLBEING SUPPORT

With Mary Maclachlan

Begin Saturday and Sunday with a gentle 45-minute yoga session. No experience is needed — simply move, stretch and breathe at your own pace. Please bring a yoga mat if you can. A limited number of spare mats will be available. Mary will also be available throughout the weekend, offering empathetic, non-judgemental listening, breathwork, grounding, quiet companionship or a peaceful walk whenever you need a little support.



FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

PLAY IN PRACTICE

FOLLOW THE PATHWAYS THAT SPARK YOUR CURIOSITY

- Workshop Map, Timetable and locations
- How to Use the Workshop Programme
- Awe & Wonder
- Belonging
- Create & Make
- Explore & Discover
- Flow, Movement & Embodiment
- Sensory & Nature Connection
- Reflect & Grow
- Risk, Challenge & Adventure
- Sparks & Connection
- Transform & Empower
- Tend Your Ember – Reflection Pages



Workshop locations



WORKSHOP LOCATIONS

Workshop Title	Workshop Provider	Description	Workshop map location	Sat AM	Sat PM	Sun AM
A 'Violent Play' Invitation	Asa Hardy-Brownlie	This workshop explores the often-misunderstood world of <i>violent play</i> , inviting participants to challenge assumptions, explore boundaries and discover why rough-and-tumble, conflict and	C			✓
An occasion of wonder and delight: planning effective celebrations	Gordon MacLellan	A creative workshop exploring how to design meaningful, story-rich celebrations, with ideas for site-specific events from lanterns to processions.	The Meeting house		✓	
Around the Embers: Sparks, Snacks and Salves	Emma Hookey	Gather around the embers for a hands-on exploration of fire, food and playful learning. Make bread twists, churn butter and create a herbal balm while discovering how practical skills, manageable risk	Z			✓
Being Imaginative and Creative Outdoors	Menna Godfrey & Liz Edwards	This workshop explores how natural environments support imaginative play, curiosity and discovery, and learn how to create the conditions for rich creative experiences to flourish.	Muddyfaces Playscape		✓	
Beyond the Classroom: Why Play is Essential for Every Child (and how to explain that	Cath Prisk	This seminar explores why play is not a luxury but a necessity. Drawing on evidence, research and real-world examples, Cath Prisk shares how play supports wellbeing, learning and inclusion—and	The Ember Hive Cafe	✓		
Developing Risky Play within Early Childhood	Rhian Thomas	A practical workshop on supporting risky play in early childhood, building confidence in enabling challenge, understanding risk vs hazard, and fostering resilience and independence.	Y		✓	✓
Eco Printing	Judith Duttall	Create beautiful eco prints using leaves and natural dyes in this creative, hands-on woodland workshop.	A	✓		✓
Fantastic Fungghi: A Foraging Adventure	John Shahabeddin	Explore the magical world of fungi with John "The Grizzly Forager" Shahabeddin. This guided woodland foray combines foraging, folklore and ecology, inviting participants to follow their curiosity	L		✓	✓
Feral Voices	Elena Harris	This participatory singing workshop explores how shared song can spark connection, strengthen relationships and deepen our sense of belonging – both with each other and with the natural world.	Q			✓
Find Your Flow: Creating Flow-ready conditions for deeper play, curiosity, and	Alex Rogers	A reflective and practical workshop exploring how Forest School can nurture Flow—those deeply immersive moments where curiosity, concentration and intrinsically motivated play naturally	B	✓	✓	✓
Forest School for autistic children and children with SEND	Frances Harris	A research-informed workshop exploring how Forest School can support autistic children and children with SEND to belong, engage and flourish. Frances Harris will share a practical toolkit with	Robin Hood Suite		✓	
From Chaos to Capability: How Child-Led Outdoor Play Builds Real-World Strength	Kristie Chesters	Discover how child-led outdoor play transforms chaos into confidence, building resilience, independence and real-world skills.	Eii	✓	✓	✓
From Inner Transformation to System Change: Exploring Forest School Leaders as	Katie Mills	This participative workshop explores how Forest School practice may transform practitioners and support them to become change agents for a more sustainable future.	U	✓	✓	
From Spark to Flow: Inclusive Games to Spark Connection, Shift Energy and Create Flow	Maria Sprostranova	A playful and inspiring hands-on workshop packed with inclusive, go-to games to spark connection, build trust, shift energy and create meaningful flow - with practical ideas you can bring straight	G		✓	
From Wood to words: The Enchanted book makers	Rebecca Winstlade	Step into the forest and let nature inspire your imagination. In this hands-on woodland journey, participants will split and shape wood to create their own unique nature-inspired book, filling its pages	W		✓	
Green Masculinities	Luke Blackham	A reflective workshop exploring how nature-based practice can support caring, connected masculinities in boys and young men.	I	✓		✓

WORKSHOP LOCATIONS

Workshop Title	Workshop Provider	Description	Workshop map location	Sat AM	Sat PM	Sun
Grow Your Nature-Based Business: From Passion to Practice	Marina Robb	This workshop explores how we can communicate the value of play, build	T			✓
How forest school supports care experienced children to build relationships	Harriet Menter & Alice Holliday	An insightful workshop exploring how Forest School can support care experienced	Robin Hood Suite			✓
How learning new skills can boost intrinsic motivations in play	Matt Couper	This workshop explores how learning new skills can become the spark for deeper,	S	✓	✓	✓
Imagining Forest School Futures: A Three Horizons Workshop	Katie Mills	This participative and imaginative workshop uses the Three Horizons	U			✓
Looking at Play, Playfully	Wem Southerden	This interactive workshop explores intriguing moments of play at Forest School	E	✓		
Magical mycelium sculpture	Hannah Hardy	Create a living mycelium sculpture and explore the magic of nature's hidden	J			✓
Making Big Bits of Wood Smaller	Peter Morton	A practical hands-on workshop exploring how edged tools can support	W	✓		✓
Nature Art and Sanctuary	Korey Bonnett	A reflective nature art workshop exploring home, belonging and sanctuary	E		✓	
Nature art as ritual	Hannah Hardy	Explore nature art as a powerful, playful ritual for connection, creativity and	J	✓	✓	
Nature as Co-Facilitator: Ecotherapy Games for Emotional Wellbeing	Charlotte Antoniou	This workshop explores sensory and reflective play—where nature supports	G			✓
Nurturing Ecological Responsibility in a Child-Led Provision	Philippa Evans	Explore how to nurture ecological responsibility through child-led play, rooted	N	✓		✓
Oak Gall Ink and mark making	John Shahabeddin	Create your own oak gall ink and explore playful mark-making techniques inspired	L	✓		
Observing Play – Why (and why not), What and How	Dr Sara Knight	A reflective workshop on observing play and gathering meaningful evidence in Forest	I		✓	
Planting connections	Claire Underwood	A playful introduction to the Children's Forest approach, exploring how imagination,	H	✓	✓	✓
Play begins in the body: exploring spontaneous movement as an innate	Vicky Mateu	A playful embodied workshop exploring spontaneous movement as a natural	X		✓	

WORKSHOP LOCATIONS

Workshop Title	Workshop Provider	Description	Workshop map location	Sat AM	Sat PM	Sun
Play in nature and the nature of play	Lily Horseman	A playful and reflective workshop exploring play theory in practice. Through	F		✓	✓
Playful Thinking in Nature – 1:1 Coaching Walks	Charlotte Atkinson & Sarah Lawfull	A gentle 1:1 coaching walk using the Time to Think approach, offering space to	Meeting point outside the Ember Hive		✓	
Playing with Embers: The Art of Tending Curiosity	Naomi Allsworth	A playful, relational exploration of fire as more than a skill. Through shared	Z	✓		
Playing with fibers	Adriana Grau-Oliver	A gentle, hands-on workshop exploring fibres through weaving, making and	D	✓	✓	
Playing with Place	Jo Hume	A hands-on workshop exploring how place actively shapes play and learning.	The Ember Hive-cafe			✓
Playing with the stuff of the Earth	Menna Godfrey & Liz Edwards	This workshop explores how soil, water and natural materials spark curiosity,	Muddyfaces Playscape	✓		
Reflections on Forest School and Autism	Michael James, Stefania Donzelli & Lewis Ames	A discussion-based workshop exploring autistic play, neurodiversity and inclusion	X	✓		
Risky Play in the Early Years	Paul Lewis	A practical workshop exploring how to support risky play, challenge and	G	✓		
Spinners and Swingers...A practical workshop on making exhilarating playstructures	Jon Cree	A practical workshop exploring how to create exhilarating rope play structures. Learn knots, lashings and safe setup while building confidence in supporting risky, challenging	T		✓	
Stories Everywhere	Gordon MacLellan	A playful workshop exploring simple activities to spark imagination and create	The Meeting house	✓		✓
The Games We Play	Tom Bardon	An energetic, hands-on workshop exploring playful games and the powerful	V	✓		✓
The Four Shields	Jason Mottram	This inspiring workshop explores how play, nature and reflection can help children and young people better understand themselves.	K		✓	✓
The Heartbeat of Play	Keana Maxwell	In this joyful and highly participatory workshop, explore the power of rhythm,	M	✓		

WORKSHOP LOCATIONS

Workshop Title	Workshop Provider	Description	Workshop map location	Sat AM	Sat PM	Sun
The power of play when children lead the way	Menna Godfrey & Liz Edwards	Through playful exploration with loose parts and natural materials, this workshop celebrates children's innate drive to learn.	Muddyfaces Playscape			✓
Time for Playful Thinking – A Time to Think Approach for Forest School Practice	Charlotte Atkinson and Sarah Lawfull	A reflective workshop exploring how the Time to Think approach supports	T	✓		
Toys, Gadgets and Thingy-Me-Bobs	Tom Bardon	A playful, hands-on workshop exploring how making and crafting can unlock creativity,	R		✓	
Translating Playwork Principles into Practice: A Practical Guide for Forest	Cath Prisk	This interactive practical workshop explores how playwork Principles and loose	Z		✓	
When the classroom doesn't fit: how play-based Forest School can unlock regulation,	Sarah Allington & Hev Nedzynski	Exploring how play-based Forest School can support regulation, connection and	K	✓		
Wild Women & how to create a wild space	Charlotte Antoniou	A creative workshop exploring how to hold safe, supportive women-only	F	✓		



Play is not one thing.

It can be loud and adventurous, full of risk, challenge and excitement. It can be quiet and reflective, found in the careful arrangement of leaves, the shaping of clay, or the telling of stories around a fire. Play can connect us to each other, to the natural world and to ourselves. It can spark curiosity, fuel creativity, nurture belonging and transform the way we see the world.

This year's workshop programme celebrates the many patterns and shapes of play that weave through Forest School practice. From movement and making to wonder and discovery, from sensory exploration to deep reflection, each workshop offers a different doorway into understanding the power of play.

As you explore the programme, you may notice threads emerging. Some workshops invite you to create and make. Others encourage you to slow down and notice. Some challenge us to think differently, while others celebrate joy, connection and community. Together they form a rich tapestry of experiences that reflect the diversity, depth and potential of play within Forest School.

To help you navigate these different patterns of play, we have grouped workshops into a number of play-inspired categories. These are not rigid boxes, as many workshops could happily sit within several categories at once. Instead, think of them as pathways through the conference—different invitations into the theme of play. You may find yourself drawn towards creativity and making, sensory exploration and nature connection, risk and adventure, belonging and community, awe and wonder, reflection and growth, or workshops that inspire transformation and change. Follow the sparks that capture your curiosity and see where they lead.

Whether you are looking to learn a new skill, explore a new perspective, deepen your practice, reconnect with your creativity or simply follow your curiosity, we hope you find workshops that ignite something within you.

A heartfelt thank you to all of our workshop providers. Through their generosity, expertise, creativity and willingness to share their practice, they help make this conference a place of inspiration, learning and connection. Their contributions are the sparks that keep our community growing and the embers glowing long after the conference fire has faded.

We invite you to explore, discover and play.

AWE & WONDER

Some moments stop us in our tracks. A story around the fire. A beautiful creation. A surprising discovery. A shared celebration. These workshops are dedicated to the magic of play – the moments of curiosity, imagination and delight that ignite something deeper within us. Through storytelling, creativity, ritual and celebration, we'll explore how awe and wonder can enrich Forest School experiences and help us see the world with fresh eyes.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT



AN OCCASION OF WONDER AND DELIGHT: PLANNING EFFECTIVE CELEBRATIONS

WITH GORDON MACLELLAN
A creative workshop exploring how to design meaningful, story-rich celebrations, with ideas for site-specific events from lanterns to processions



FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 14.30-16.30
The Meeting House



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT



PLAYING WITH EMBERS: THE ART OF TENDING CURIOSITY

WITH NAOMI ALLSWORTH
A playful, relational exploration of fire as more than a skill. Through shared fire-making and storytelling, discover how tending embers deepens presence, attention and connection.



FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30
Location:Z



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT



STORIES EVERYWHERE

WITH GORDON MACLELLAN
A playful workshop exploring simple activities to spark imagination and create dynamic storywalks, using found materials, conversation and creativity



FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30
Sunday 27 September 10.30-12.30
The Meeting House

“WONDER BEGINS THE MOMENT WE PAUSE LONG ENOUGH TO NOTICE.”

A SENSE OF BELONGING

At its best, Forest School creates spaces where people feel seen, valued and accepted for who they are. These workshops explore inclusion, identity, relationships and community, inviting us to reflect on how we create environments where everyone can thrive. From supporting neurodivergent learners to working with vulnerable children and marginalised communities, these sessions celebrate the many ways Forest School can nurture belonging, connection and acceptance.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

FOREST SCHOOL FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN AND CHILDREN WITH SEND
WITH FRANCES HARRIS

A research-informed workshop exploring how Forest School can support autistic children and children with SEND to belong, engage and flourish. Frances Harris will share a practical toolkit with guidance and simple tools to help evidence the impact of Forest School.



FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 14.30-16.30
Workshop location: Robin Hood Suite



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

HOW FOREST SCHOOL CAN SUPPORT CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS
WITH HARRIET MENTER & ALICE HOLLIDAY

An insightful workshop exploring how Forest School can support care experienced children to build trust, connection and relationships through play.



FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Sunday 27 September 10.30-12.30
Workshop location: Robin Hood Suite



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

REFLECTIONS ON FOREST SCHOOL AND AUTISM
WITH MICHAEL JAMES & STEFANIA DONZELLI

A discussion-based workshop exploring autistic play, neurodiversity and inclusion in Forest School. Michael and Stefania share insights from the new edition of Forest School & Autism, inviting us to celebrate different ways autistic children play, connect and belong.



FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30
Location: X



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

WILD WOMEN & HOW TO CREATE A WILD SPACE
WITH MELISSA AND CHARLOTTE

A creative workshop exploring how to hold safe, supportive women-only woodland spaces, with ideas and guidance to nurture wellbeing, connection and authentic self-expression.



FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30
Location: F



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

NATURE ART AND SANCTUARY
WITH KOREY BONNETT

A reflective nature art workshop exploring home, belonging and sanctuary through creative, nature-based play.



FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 14.30-16.30
Location: E



Reflection:

Think of a time when you truly felt you belonged.

What helped create that feeling?

What things do you need in place to feel safe?

How do you create a sense of belonging in your groups?

A SENSE OF BELONGING – CONTINUED

Further invitations to consider identity, regulation and the relationships that allow people to be fully themselves.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT



GREEN MASCULINITIES
WITH LUKE BLACKHAM

A reflective workshop exploring how nature-based practice can support caring, connected masculinities in boys and young men.



FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September • 10.30–12.30

Sunday 27 September • 10.30–12.30

Location: I



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT



WHEN THE CLASSROOM DOESN'T FIT: HOW PLAY-BASED FOREST SCHOOL CAN UNLOCK REGULATION, CONNECTION AND GROWTH FOR NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN
WITH SARAH ALLINGTON AND HEV NEDZYNSKI

Exploring how play-based Forest School can support regulation, connection and growth for neurodivergent children.



"Not all classrooms have four walls"

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September • 10.30–12.30

Location: K



Make space for belonging

Notice who is at the edge of a group. How could you offer an invitation without pressure and make room for different ways of joining in?

How could you offer an invitation without pressure?

What could help different ways of communicating, regulating and joining in feel welcome?

What does “safe enough to be yourself” look, sound and feel like?

“Belonging begins when every person is given space to be themselves.”

CREATE & MAKE

There is something deeply satisfying about making, crafting and creating with our hands. These workshops celebrate the playful act of transforming materials into something new – whether through art, sculpture, fibres, printing, tools or natural resources. Rooted in curiosity and experimentation, they invite delegates to rediscover the joy of creating without fear of getting it wrong and to explore the ways making can support expression, confidence and imagination.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

EMBERS
THE FREE SPIRIT NETWORK

ECO PRINTING
WITH JUDITH DUTNALL

Create beautiful eco prints using leaves and natural dyes in this creative, hands-on woodland workshop.

No two prints are ever the same – just like no two moments in nature

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30
Sunday 27 September 10.30-12.30
Location: A



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

EMBERS
THE FREE SPIRIT NETWORK

MAGICAL MYCELIUM SCULPTURE
WITH HANNAH HARDY

Create a living mycelium sculpture and explore the magic of nature's hidden connections through playful creativity.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Sunday 27 September 10.30-12.30
Location: J



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

EMBERS
THE FREE SPIRIT NETWORK

RED OAK BUSHCRAFTS
Bushcraft & Wilderness Skills Courses

MAKING BIG BITS OF WOOD SMALLER
WITH PETER MORTON

A practical hands-on workshop exploring how edged tools can support creativity, confidence and playful learning in Forest School. We'll explore simple woodland crafts, safe tool use, maintenance, storage and group management.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30
Sunday 27 September 10.30-12.30
Location: W



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

EMBERS
THE FREE SPIRIT NETWORK

NATURE ART AS RITUAL
WITH HANNAH HARDY

Explore nature art as a powerful, playful ritual for connection, creativity and community

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30
Saturday 26 September 14.30-16.30
Location: J



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

EMBERS
THE FREE SPIRIT NETWORK

Flo's
The Place in the Park
Forest School

PLAYING WITH FIBERS
WITH ADRIANA GRAU OLIVER

A gentle, hands-on workshop exploring fibres through weaving, making and connection in a cosy, creative space.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30
Saturday 26 September 14.30-16.30
Location: D



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

EMBERS
THE FREE SPIRIT NETWORK

COVENTRY OUTDOORS
EDUCATION & ADVENTURE SERVICE

TOYS, GADGETS AND THINGY-ME-BOBS
WITH TOM BARDON

A playful, hands-on workshop exploring how making and crafting can unlock creativity, confidence and potential through play.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30
Location: R

“OUR HANDS OFTEN DISCOVER WHAT OUR MINDS HAVE NOT YET FOUND.”

CREATE & MAKE – CONTINUED

More opportunities to work with fire, wood, earth, ink and imagination through practical, playful making.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

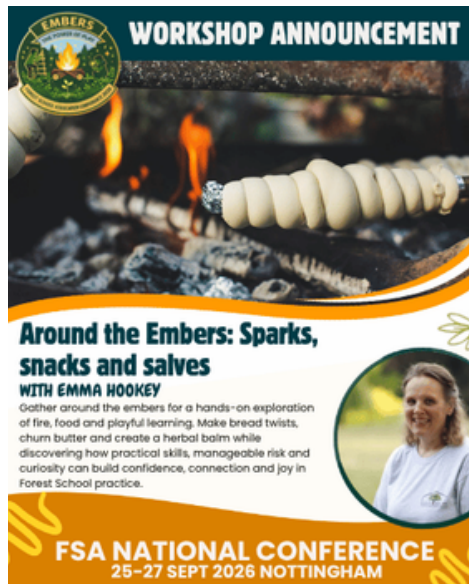
FROM WOOD TO WORDS: THE ENCHANTED BOOK MAKERS
WITH REBECCA WINSLADE

Split and shape wood to create your own nature-inspired book, fill its pages with poetry, stories and woodland wonders, and craft a tiny fairy ladder along the way. A playful blend of woodland skills, creativity and storytelling – where every branch has a story to tell.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 14.30–16.30

Location: W



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

Around the Embers: Sparks, snacks and salves
WITH EMMA HOOKEY

Gather around the embers for a hands-on exploration of fire, food and playful learning. Make bread twists, churn butter and create a herbal balm while discovering how practical skills, manageable risk and curiosity can build confidence, connection and joy in Forest School practice.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Sunday 27 September · 10.30–12.30

Location: Z



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

OAK GALL INK & MARK MAKING
WITH JOHN "THE GRIZZLY FORAGER" SHAHABEDDIN

Create your own oak gall ink and explore playful mark-making techniques inspired by nature. This hands-on workshop celebrates curiosity, creativity and the transformation of natural materials into art, story and expression.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 10.30–12.30

Location: L



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

HOW LEARNING NEW SKILLS CAN BOOST INTRINSIC MOTIVATIONS IN PLAY.
WITH MATT COUPER

This workshop explores how learning new skills can become the spark for deeper, child-led play. Discover how simple techniques and practical skills can empower learners to extend, enrich and direct their own play experiences.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30

Saturday 26 September 14.30-16.30

Sunday 27 September 10.30-12.30

Location: S



FOLLOW THE MATERIAL

Choose one material and spend a few minutes exploring what it can do.

What changes when you allow the process, rather than the finished result, to guide you?

Reflection

Which material or making process sparked your curiosity—and what might you take back into your practice?

“When we make with curiosity, the material becomes part of the conversation.”

NATURE CONNECTION & SENSORY EXPLORATION

The natural world invites us to notice, move, touch, listen and explore. These workshops celebrate embodied, sensory and place-responsive play—from loose parts and spontaneous movement to emotional wellbeing and learning shaped by the land. Together we'll consider how nature can become an active partner in curiosity, regulation, imagination and connection.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

NATURE AS CO-FACILITATOR: ECOTHERAPY GAMES FOR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING
WITH CHARLOTTE ANTINOO

This workshop explores sensory and reflective play — where nature supports regulation, connection and emotional wellbeing.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Sunday 27 September · 10.30–12.30

Location: G



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

PLAY BEGINS IN THE BODY: EXPLORING SPONTANEOUS MOVEMENT AS A INNATE LANGUAGE OF LIFE
WITH VICKY MATEU

A playful, embodied workshop exploring spontaneous movement as a natural language — offering insight into behaviour, creativity and connection through the body.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 14.30–16.30

Location: X



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

PLAYING WITH PLACE
WITH DR JOANNA HUME

A hands-on workshop exploring how place actively shapes play and learning. Through walking, observation and reflection, you'll gain a new lens on your Forest School site and its role in practice.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Sunday 27 September · 10.30–12.30

Location: The Ember Hive Café



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

PLAY IN NATURE AND THE NATURE OF PLAY
WITH LILY HORSEMAN

A playful and reflective workshop exploring play theory in practice. Through hands-on activities, discussion and curiosity, Lily invites you to explore how play in nature supports our bodies, brains and nervous systems — and how we, as practitioners, can nurture and protect it.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 14.30–16.30

Sunday 27 September · 10.30–12.30

Location: F



Follow your senses

Pause somewhere outdoors.
Notice five things you can see.
Four things you can feel.
Three things you can hear.
Let curiosity decide what you explore next.

Reflection

How does a place change when we experience it through our whole body?

“NATURE INVITES THE WHOLE BODY INTO PLAY.”

NATURE CONNECTION & SENSORY EXPLORATION

The natural world invites us to notice, move, touch, listen and explore.

Join Menna Godfrey and Liz Edwards at the Muddy Faces Playscape to explore embodied, sensory and place-responsive play. Through loose parts, natural materials and imaginative experiences, these workshops consider how the land can become an active partner in curiosity, creativity and learning.



Saturday 26 September · 10.30–12.30

Reflections

What did the material invite you to do?
When did curiosity become deep play?



Saturday 26 September · 14.30–16.30

Reflections

When did something ordinary become something else?
What conditions gave imagination room to flourish?

Reflections

What changed when the adult stepped back?
What became possible when children led the way?



Sunday 27 September · 10.30–12.30

NOTICE • IMAGINE • TRUST

Which natural material sparked your curiosity?

What possibilities emerged through play?

What might happen if you create the conditions—
and trust children to lead the way?

“Nature invites the whole body into play.”

EXPLORE & DISCOVER

Curiosity is the spark that drives exploration. These workshops celebrate investigation, discovery and learning through direct experience. Whether foraging, navigating, experimenting, asking questions or following a thread of interest, participants will be encouraged to embrace the playful spirit of inquiry. Together we'll explore how Forest School creates opportunities for children and adults to discover new skills, deepen understanding and develop a lifelong love of learning.



EMBERS
THE POWER OF PLAY

WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

FANTASTIC FUNGI: A FORAGING ADVENTURE
WITH JOHN "THE GRIZZLY FORAGER" SHAHABEDDIN

Explore the magical world of fungi with John "The Grizzly Forager" Shahabeddin. This guided woodland foray combines foraging, folklore and ecology, inviting participants to follow their curiosity and discover the hidden wonders of the forest floor.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 14.30-16.30

Sunday 27 September 10.30-12.30

Location: L



FOLLOW THE FUNGI TRAIL...

What hidden details did you discover on the forest floor?

How did folklore change the way you saw fungi?

What relationships might be unfolding beneath your feet?

What did you notice that you might usually walk past?



TEND YOUR EMBER AND GO FOR A WANDER

An invitation to carry the spirit of this pathway into your weekend

Leave your map behind.

Take ten minutes with no destination.

Allow curiosity—not efficiency—to decide where your feet take you.



"CURIOSITY IS THE SPARK THAT TURNS A QUESTION INTO AN ADVENTURE."

RISK, CHALLENGE AND ADVENTURE

Adventure lives at the edge of what we know. These workshops explore the role of uncertainty, challenge, risk and excitement in play and learning. Through discussion, practical experiences and reflection, we'll consider how risk supports confidence, resilience, problem-solving and growth. Together we'll explore how practitioners can create environments where children and adults feel safe enough to take meaningful risks and discover what they are capable of.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

DEVELOPING RISKY PLAY WITHIN EARLY CHILDHOOD
WITH RHIAN THOMAS

A practical workshop on supporting risky play in early childhood, building confidence in enabling challenge, understanding risk vs hazard, and fostering resilience and independence.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 14.30-16.30

Sunday 27 September 10.30-12.30

Location: Y



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

RISKY PLAY IN THE EARLY YEARS
WITH PAUL LEWIS

A hands-on workshop exploring how risky play supports confidence, resilience and development in the early years.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30

Location: G



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

SPINNERS AND SWINGERS: A PRACTICAL WORKSHOP ON MAKING EXHILARATING PLAY STRUCTURES
WITH JON CREE

A practical workshop exploring how to create exhilarating rope play structures. Learn knots, lashings and safe setup while building confidence in supporting risky, challenging play.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 14.30-16.30

Location: T



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

A 'VIOLENT PLAY' INVITATION
WITH ASA HARDY-BROWNLEE

This workshop explores the often-misunderstood world of violent play, inviting participants to challenge assumptions, explore boundaries and discover why rough-and-tumble, conflict and opposition can be an important part of healthy play experiences.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Sunday 27 September 10.30-12.30

Location: C



Ignite the ember

Stretch your comfort zone.

Choose one thing this weekend you've never tried before.

A workshop. A conversation. A skill. A game.

Notice what happens when courage replaces certainty.

Reflection

What felt just outside your comfort zone—and what happened when you stepped towards it?

"AT THE EDGE OF UNCERTAINTY, CONFIDENCE BEGINS TO GROW."

SPARKS AND CONNECTION

Every fire begins with a spark. These workshops celebrate the moments where play brings people together, builds relationships and creates a sense of belonging. Through games singing, shared experiences, laughter, conversation and collaboration, we'll explore how connection sits at the heart of Forest School practice. Whether you're looking for practical activities, community-building ideas or opportunities to deepen relationships, these sessions remind us that play is often the bridge between strangers becoming friends and groups becoming communities.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

FROM SPARK TO FLOW: INCLUSIVE GAMES TO SPARK CONNECTION, SHIFT ENERGY AND CREATE FLOW WITH MARTIA SPROSTRANOVA

A playful and inspiring hands-on workshop packed with inclusive, go-to games to spark connection, build trust, shift energy and create meaningful flow - with practical ideas you can bring straight into your Forest School practice - whatever the weather, mood or moment brings.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 14.30-16.30
Location: G



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

THE GAMES WE PLAY
WITH TOM BARDON

An energetic, hands-on workshop exploring playful games and the powerful reasons behind why we play.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30-12.30
Sunday 27 September 10.30-12.30
Location: V



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

FOREST VOICES
WITH ELENA HARRIS

This workshop explores how shared song can nurture connection, belonging and wellbeing. Through simple harmony songs inspired by nature, participants will experience the joy of singing together and connecting with community and place.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Sunday 27 September · 10.30-12.30
Location: Q



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

THE HEARTBEAT OF PLAY
WITH INDIGO FOREST SCHOOL CIC

In this joyful and highly participatory workshop explores the power of rhythm, movement and song to bring people together. Through shared beats, playful activities and collective creativity, we'll experience how a simple rhythm can spark connection, belonging and joy.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 10.30-12.30
Location: M



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

GROWING CONNECTIONS: PLANTING TREES THROUGH PLAY AND IMAGINATION
WITH CLAIRE UNDERWOOD

In this inspiring and hands-on workshop, Claire introduces an approach to tree planting inspired by the Children's Forest process, exploring how playful, child-centred experiences can nurture lasting relationships with nature.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25-27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 14.30-16.30
Saturday 26 September · 14.30-16.30
Sunday 27 September · 10.30-12.30
Location: H



Keep the sparks alive

An invitation to carry the spirit of this pathway into your weekend

Before you leave, think of one person you've met this weekend that you'd like to stay connected with.

Exchange details.

Arrange a visit.

Plan a collaboration.

Sometimes the most important thing we take home isn't a resource or an idea—it's a relationship.

"EVERY MEANINGFUL CONNECTION BEGINS WITH A SPARK."

REFLECT & GROW

Play gives us space to pause, notice and see things differently. These workshops invite reflection on practice, helping us explore the conditions that support curiosity and meaningful learning.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

FIND YOUR FLOW: CREATING FLOW-READY CONDITIONS FOR DEEPER PLAY, CURIOSITY AND ENGAGEMENT
WITH ALEX ROGERS AND REBECCA MEAGER

A reflective and practical workshop exploring how Forest School can nurture Flow – those deeply immersive moments where curiosity, concentration and intrinsically motivated play naturally emerge.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
 25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 10.30–12.30
 Saturday 26 September · 14.30–16.30
 Sunday 27 September · 10.30–12.30
 Location: B



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

LOOKING AT PLAY, PLAYFULLY
WITH WEM SOUTHERDEN

This interactive workshop explores intriguing moments of play at Forest School through structured questioning, discussion, drama and role play, inviting practitioners to reflect on what may be unfolding in children's play and to consider their role in a playful, inclusive and non-judgemental space.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
 25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 10.30–12.30
 Location: E



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

OBSERVING PLAY - WHY (AND WHY NOT), WHAT AND HOW.
WITH DR SARA KNIGHT

A reflective workshop on observing play and gathering meaningful evidence in Forest School.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
 25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 14.30–16.30
 Location: I

TEND THE EMBER



What have you noticed this weekend that has made you pause, question or see your practice differently?

Something I want to think about more...

Something I want to try differently...

Something I want to carry back into my practice



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

PLAYFUL THINKING IN NATURE – 1:1 COACHING WALKS
WITH CHARLOTTE ATKINSON AND SARAH LAWFULL

A gentle 1:1 coaching walk using the Time to Think approach, offering space to pause, reflect and gain clarity in nature through attentive listening and simple, supportive prompts.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
 25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 14.30–16.30
 Location: Meeting point outside the Ember Hive



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

THE FOUR SHIELDS: USING OUTDOOR APPROACHES TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THEIR FEELINGS
WITH ANDREW DOWLING

This inspiring workshop explores how play, nature and reflection can help children and young people better understand themselves.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
 25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 14.30–16.30
 Sunday 27 September · 10.30–12.30
 Location: K

TRANSFORM AND EMPOWER

Play has the power to change us. These workshops explore how Forest School can influence individuals, organisations and communities, helping us develop confidence, resilience, leadership and agency. Together we'll consider how Forest School practitioners can become advocates, changemakers and catalysts for positive transformation, while exploring new ways of thinking about our role in supporting children, communities and the future of our sector.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: WHY PLAY IS ESSENTIAL FOR EVERY CHILD (AND HOW TO EXPLAIN THAT TO HEAD TEACHERS SO THEY UNDERSTAND)
WITH CATH PRISK

this seminar explores why play is not a luxury but a necessity. Drawing on evidence, research and real-world examples, Cath Prisk shares how play supports wellbeing, learning and inclusion—and how to confidently communicate its value to schools and senior leaders.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30–12.30

Location: The Ember Hive Café



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

FROM CHAOS TO CAPABILITY: HOW CHILD-LED OUTDOOR PLAY BUILDS REAL-WORLD STRENGTH
WITH KRISTIE CHESTERS

Discover how child-led outdoor play transforms chaos into confidence, building resilience, independence and real-world skills.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30–12.30

Saturday 26 September 14.30–16.30

Sunday 27 September 10.30–12.30

Location: E ii



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

From Inner Transformation to System Change: Exploring Forest School Leaders as Change Agents for a Sustainable Future
WITH KATIE MILLS, COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

This participative workshop explores how Forest School practice may transform practitioners and support them to become change agents for a more sustainable future.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 10.30–12.30

Saturday 26 September 14.30–16.30

Location: U



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

Imagining Forest School Futures: A Three Horizons Workshop
WITH KATIE MILLS, COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

This participative and imaginative workshop uses the Three Horizons framework to explore how Forest School and its practitioners can help shape a more sustainable future.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Sunday 27 September 10.30–12e.30

Location: U



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

TRANSLATING PLAYWORK PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR FOREST SCHOOLS LEADERS WORKING IN SCHOOL GROUNDS
WITH CATH PRISK

This interactive practical workshop explores how Playwork Principles and loose parts can transform everyday school grounds into richer, more playful environments that support creativity, risk-taking and child-led play.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September 14.30–16.30

Location: Z



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

CIRCLE OF LIFE REDISCOVERY

GROW YOUR NATURE-BASED BUSINESS: FROM PASSION TO PRACTICE
WITH MARINA ROBB

This workshop explores how we can communicate the value of play, build sustainable livelihoods and ensure this important work can continue to flourish for future generations.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

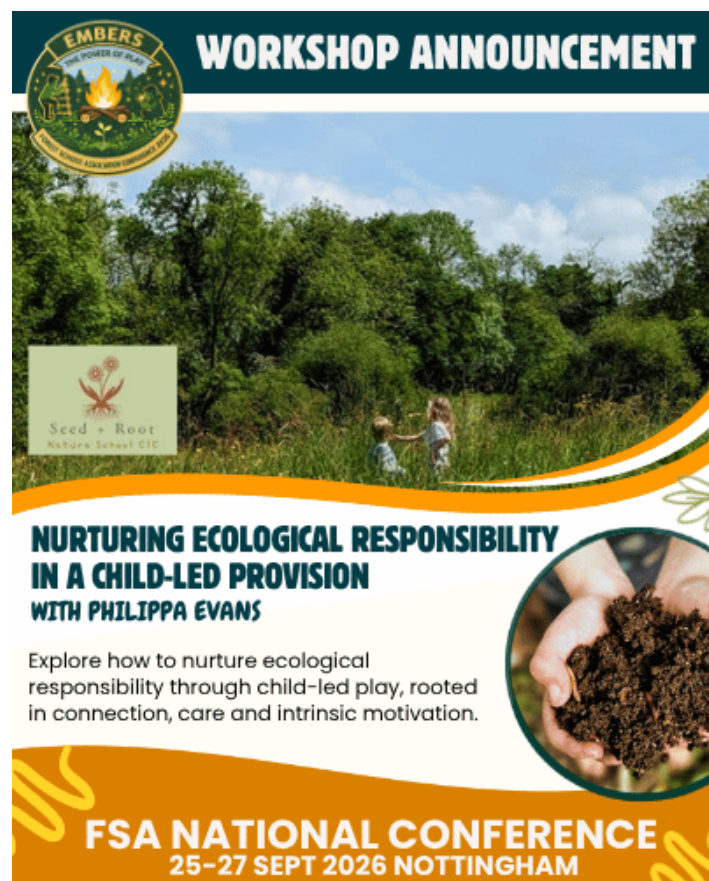
Sunday 27 September 10.30–12.30

Location: T

“TRANSFORMATION BEGINS WITH A SINGLE SPARK—ONE IDEA, ONE EXPERIENCE, ONE MOMENT THAT CHANGES THE WAY WE SEE THE WORLD.”

TRANSFORM & EMPOWER – CONTINUED

Two further workshops focus on ecological responsibility and the reflective thinking needed to shape a sustainable future.



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

NURTURING ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A CHILD-LED PROVISION
WITH PHILIPPA EVANS

Explore how to nurture ecological responsibility through child-led play, rooted in connection, care and intrinsic motivation.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 10.30–12.30
Sunday 27 September · 10.30–12.30

Location: N



WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

TIME FOR PLAYFUL THINKING – A TIME TO THINK APPROACH FOR FOREST SCHOOL PRACTICE
WITH CHARLOTTE ATKINSON AND SARAH LAWFULL

A reflective workshop exploring how the Time to Think approach supports independent thinking in Forest School, offering simple, practical tools to build confidence and connection.

FSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
25–27 SEPT 2026 NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 26 September · 10.30–12.30

Location: T



Carry the change forward

Choose one idea from this weekend that you want to act on. What is the smallest useful first step – and who could help you keep it moving?

- Something I want to change...
- Something I want to protect...
- Something I want to make more space for...
- One small first step...
- Someone I want to continue this conversation with...

“Change begins when reflection becomes practice.”

MEET OUR CONFERENCE PARTNERS

Helping us keep the embers burning.

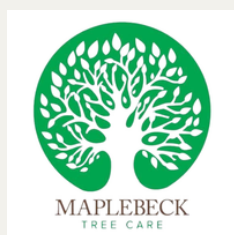
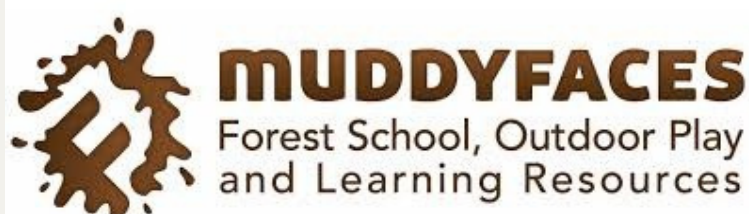
The FSA National Conference simply wouldn't be possible without the generosity of the organisations that choose to stand alongside our community.

Their support helps us bring people together, create opportunities for professional development and shared learning, support connection and research, and make the weekend richer and more accessible for everyone.

This year, our sponsors are doing more than supporting the conference financially. They are helping people get here, gather, play, rest, connect and celebrate.

Throughout the weekend, you can meet many of them in our Sponsorship Circle beside the Ember Hive.

Please take a moment to say hello to the people helping make Embers: The Power of Play possible!



HEADLINE SPONSOR

COVENTRY OUTDOORS

Coventry Outdoors are our Headline Sponsor for the FSA National Conference 2026, helping us make the weekend more welcoming, accessible and memorable from the moment delegates begin their journey.

Thanks to their generous support, delegates travelling by train can use our complimentary 16-seat shuttle service between Retford Railway Station and Walesby Forest on Friday and Sunday – helping more of our community reach the conference without needing to travel by car.

Coventry Outdoors are also providing the conference cake for our community to share, workshops across the weekend and have donated an incredible £2,500+ worth of raffle prizes for delegates to enjoy.

Their support reaches right across the weekend – from helping people get here, to bringing everyone together, to adding some extra excitement and generosity to the conference raffle.

Sometimes supporting a conference looks like transport, partnership and practical help...

and sometimes it looks like cake, prizes and a whole lot of community spirit.



A huge thank you to Coventry Outdoors for helping bring our Forest School community together.



OUTDOOR EDUCATION · ADVENTURE · LEARNING

Creating meaningful experiences through the outdoors.

Coventry Outdoors provides outdoor education experiences for children, young people and adults, working with schools from Early Years through to FE and HE, alongside community groups, youth groups, families and organisations.

Their approach places the outdoor environment at the heart of learning and development, helping children and young people build the skills, knowledge, confidence and experiences that support them as they grow.

From Forest School and bushcraft to outdoor adventure, team challenges and residential experiences, Coventry Outdoors creates opportunities to learn, explore, connect and grow through meaningful experiences outdoors.

Together.



<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/coventryoutdoors>



outdooreducation@coventry.gov.uk



024 7538 1495



CONFERENCE SPONSOR

Muddy Faces

We're delighted to welcome Muddy Faces as a sponsor of the FSA National Conference 2026 — Embers: The Power of Play.

A long-standing supporter of the Forest School Association, Muddy Faces has spent many years inspiring and supporting practitioners through practical resources, creative ideas and a strong commitment to helping children spend meaningful time outdoors.

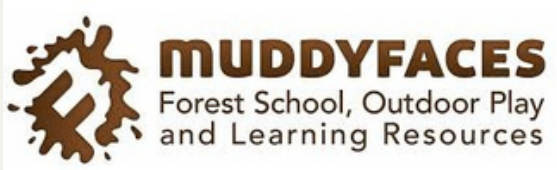
Their support of this year's conference extends across both the Ember Marketplace and the Play Scape, creating opportunities for delegates to discover resources, connect with the team and experience play in action.

VISIT MUDDY FACES IN THE EMBER MARKETPLACE

Come and meet Liz Edwards and the Muddy Faces team and browse a wide range of resources for Forest School and outdoor learning, including:

- Tools and equipment
- Shelters and seating
- Health and safety supplies
- Practical kits and resources
- Outdoor learning essentials

Muddy Faces is committed to sourcing from local suppliers and using sustainably managed materials wherever possible.



Special Conference offer

**10% off purchases
for FSA Conference
delegates**



EXPLORE THE PLAY SCAPE

Alongside their marketplace stall, Muddy Faces and Outdoors Thinking are bringing the Play Scape to the conference.

This immersive space invites delegates to explore the why, what and how of play through natural materials, loose parts, water, earth, imagination and open-ended experiences.

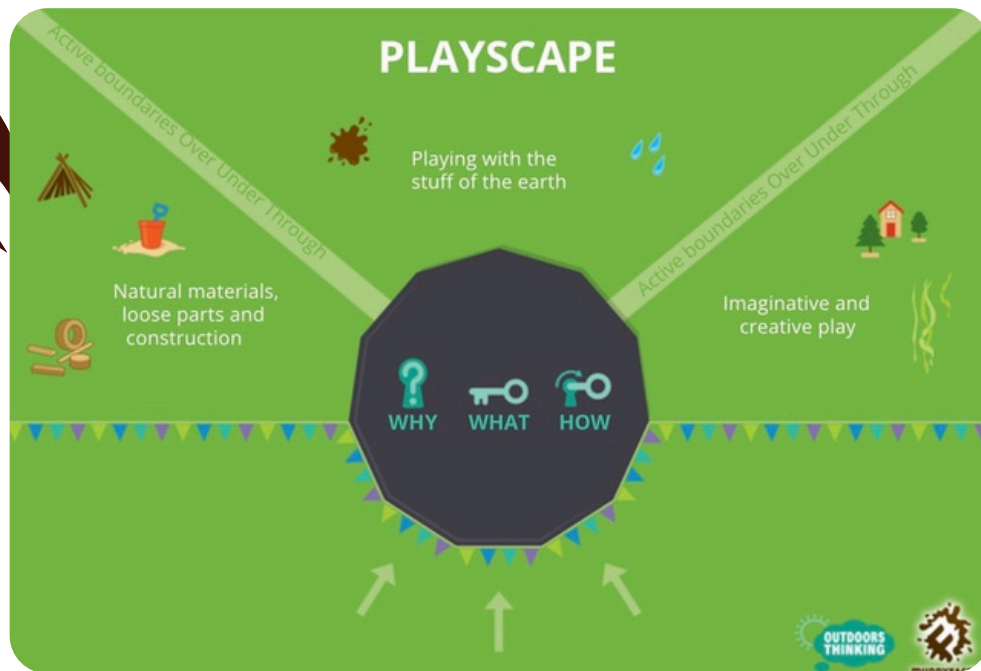
Step in. Play. Stay. Wonder.

A huge thank you to Liz Edwards and the Muddy Faces team for their continued support of the FSA and for helping us bring Embers: The Power of Play!





THE MUDDYFACES PLAYSCAPE WITH STEP IN. PLAY. STAY. WONDER.



Exploring the Why, What & How of Play

Discover an immersive play space where curiosity leads the way and play becomes the teacher. Everyone is invited to come and play!



NATURAL MATERIALS

LOOSE PARTS •
CONSTRUCTION •
CHALLENGE



**PLAYING WITH THE STUFF
OF THE EARTH**

MUD • WATER • WONDER



**IMAGINATIVE &
CREATIVE PLAY**

OPEN-ENDED RESOURCES •
SMALL WORLDS • STORY

**DROP IN THROUGHOUT THE CONFERENCE
OUTSIDE THE MEETING HOUSE**

ITC FIRST

Long-standing friends of the FSA, ITC First have supported FSA National Conferences and Regional Roadshows for many years, demonstrating a continued commitment to Forest School and the wider outdoor learning community.

ITC First is an FSA Supported Awarding Organisation. Its Centres offer Forest School qualifications recognised by the FSA, and ITC First participates in the FSA-hosted Awarding Organisations Forum.

“We support the conference because it’s the single biggest gathering of Forest School professionals in the UK. It’s probably the only event where we can have a business meeting around a campfire while drinking herbal tea or beer, then go and have a dance. It’s an outdoor conference for outdoor people —what’s not to love?”

— Mark Moore, ITC First



itcfirst.org.uk/contact



mail@itcfirst.org.uk



03453707610





The Awarding Organisation that cares.

Deliver ITC First Forest School qualifications and help shape the next generation of practitioners. Share your expertise, inspire confidence, and make a lasting impact on learners, communities, and the natural world. All with a supportive and friendly Awarding Organisation

Supporting Outdoor Education with:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| Forest School Qualifications | ✓ | Bushcraft Qualifications | ✓ |
| Outdoor Learning Qualifications | ✓ | First Aid Qualifications | ✓ |

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www.itcfirst.org.uk



mail@itcfirst.org.uk

01429 867171

BIRNBECK

Supporting Play, Exploration & Connection

Birnbeck Insurance has worked alongside the Forest School Association and wider Forest School community for more than ten years, providing specialist insurance for trainees, qualified practitioners and Forest School groups.

Their experience of the sector means they understand that Forest School practice can look very different from one setting to another — and that practitioners need insurance designed with the realities of outdoor practice in mind.

Forest School Insurance

- Cover from as little as £183
- £5m or £10m Public Liability
- Immediate cover for Level 3 practical sessions
- Cover for unpaid volunteers without adding Employers' Liability
- Activities including bushcraft, beach school and birthday parties can be included on request
- Additional options include Personal Accident, Professional Indemnity, Tools & Equipment, Home, Motor and Travel

Why Birnbeck supports the FSA Conference

Stuart Rose Dip CII, Director of Birnbeck Insurance, shares:

“For Birnbeck Insurance it has been a real privilege to work with the Forest School Association for more than a decade, along with the wider Forest School community.

Along with maintaining our profile amongst Forest School practitioners, sponsoring the conference is a good way to stay up to speed with the latest developments in Forest School. We need to keep learning as well so the products and services we offer can evolve.

On a broader note, we want to support the Forest School Association and Forest School generally due to the positive role they play in helping children realise their potential and engage with nature.”

SUPPORTING PRACTITIONERS. SUPPORTING FOREST SCHOOL. SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY.

Birnbeck

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office@birnbeck.com



01934 522 252

Come and say hello

A huge thank you to Stuart and the Birnbeck team for their continued support of the Forest School Association and our National Conference.

Stuart and Kallum will be joining us at the Ember Marketplace throughout the weekend, so pop along, say hello, ask your insurance questions and meet the people behind the cover.



Birnbeck Insurance Services



Insuring Forest Schools
from as little as **£183**
for Trainees, Qualified
Practitioners and Groups

Cover can be
provided
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sessions

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Equipment, Home,
Motor and Travel

Additional activities
can be written into
the policy on request,
such as bushcraft,
beach school and
birthday parties

Contact us to see how we can help you.

Visit our website www.birnbeckinsurance.co.uk

Email office@birnbeck.com or phone 01934 522 252



Supporting quality Forest School training

A long-standing supporter of FSA National Conferences, AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group demonstrates an ongoing commitment to Forest School and the wider outdoor learning sector.

AIM is an FSA Supported Awarding Organisation. Its Centres offer Forest School qualifications recognised by the FSA, and AIM participates in the FSA-hosted Awarding Organisations Forum, which periodically reviews and revises the suite of Forest School qualifications.

IN THEIR WORDS

“We are proud to sponsor the FSA Conference 2026. The theme, The Power of Play, reflects what we believe at AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group: that meaningful learning happens when curiosity, confidence and real-world experience come together. Forest School embodies this beautifully, and we are delighted to support a community that champions child-centred, purposeful education.”



aimgroup.org.uk



enquiries@aimgroup.org.uk



0333 034 8833

Come and say hello
Meet the AIM team in the Sponsorship
Circle beside the Ember Hive and
discover more about their qualifications
and support for Forest School training
and professional development.



TENTSILE

Supporting Play, Exploration & Connection

We're delighted to welcome Tentsile as a sponsor of the FSA National Conference 2026 - Embers: The Power of Play. Tentsile's commitment to outdoor play, exploration, nature connection and Leave No Trace principles makes them a wonderful fit for this year's conference and its theme.

Tentsile creates elevated outdoor spaces that invite exploration, creativity and connection with nature. Their tree tents and hammocks can become outdoor classrooms, reading and storytelling nooks, observation platforms or imaginative play spaces — offering children and adults memorable ways to experience the woodland.

Their approach also aligns closely with **Leave No Trace principles**, reflecting a shared commitment to enjoying outdoor spaces while caring for the environments that make those experiences possible.

TRY TENTSILE AT THE CONFERENCE

Head into the woodland during the weekend and you'll find Tentsile tree tents and hammocks set up for delegates to explore and try for themselves.

You can also meet the Tentsile team in the **Ember Marketplace**.



tentsile.com



support@tentsile.com



+44 (0)7883 100 857





BRING YOUR PORTABLE TREEHOUSE EVERYWHERE

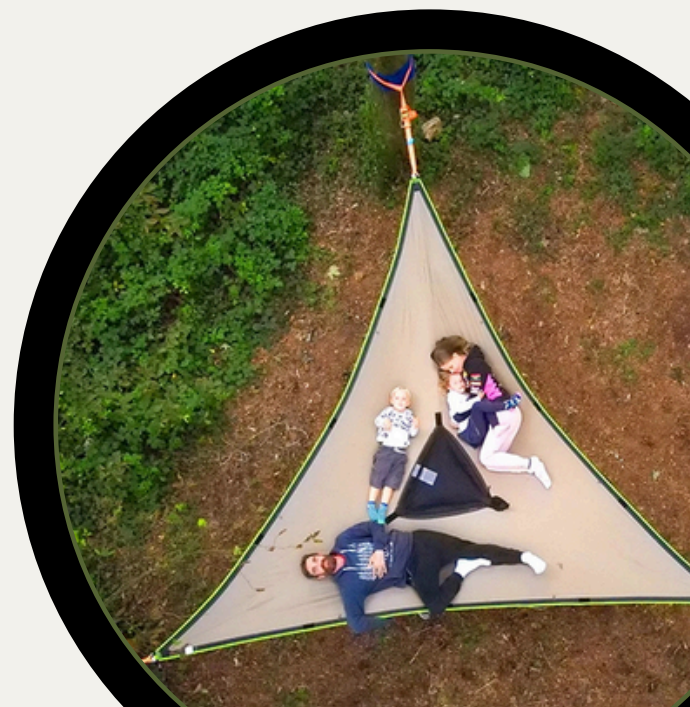
"Tentsile is very happy to sponsor the FSA Conference 2026 because our tree tents support many elements of the Forest School principles. Playing and exploring the forest is a key part to building character and feeling comfortable in our changing world. Forest Play enables us to be free."

-Robert Shirley-Smith

WIN A TENTSILE TRILLIUM HAMMOCK

As well as supporting the conference, Tentsile have generously donated a Tentsile Trillium Hammock worth £399 to our Conference Raffle.

A huge thank you to Tentsile for supporting Embers: The Power of Play and helping us create even more opportunities for delegates to pause, play, look up and experience the woodland from a different perspective.



OAKLINE

HELPING YOU FIND YOUR WAY

A huge amount of gratitude goes to Gabriel, founder of Oakline, for supporting the FSA National Conference 2026.

Gabriel has been working tirelessly behind the scenes for many months to develop the FSA Conference Navigator—an additional layer of support to help delegates find their way around the Walesby site and discover everything happening throughout the weekend.

With an interactive map, event and workshop information, schedules and conference announcements, the Navigator has been thoughtfully created to help everyone feel more informed, confident and connected.

TECHNOLOGY THAT SUPPORTS THE OUTDOORS

Oakline is a platform built specifically for Forest School and outdoor learning providers, bringing bookings, payments, registers, family information, Learning Journeys, staff management and day-to-day administration together in one place.

It is designed around a simple principle: technology should reduce administration so practitioners can spend more time focused on what really matters—the children and the experience outdoors.

“Forest School is built on connection — with nature, with children and with each other as practitioners. Supporting this conference is important to Oakline because bringing the community together creates opportunities to share knowledge, strengthen practice and help Forest School continue to grow. Technology should support that work, never get in the way of it.”

— Gabriel, Oakline

**THANK YOU OAKLINE, FOR HELPING OUR
CONFERENCE COMMUNITY NAVIGATE,
CONNECT AND EXPLORE**



oakline.app



hello@oakline.app



+44 7359 857833

FSA
FOREST SCHOOL
ASSOCIATION

Conference Navigator

Enter the email used for your conference registration.

you@example.com

Continue

AM POWER

LIGHTING THE WAY

A huge thank you to AM Power for generously providing the tower lighting for the FSA National Conference 2026.

Their support will help illuminate our main field and Ember Marketplace, creating a safer and more welcoming space for delegates to gather, connect and enjoy the conference after dark.

When we unexpectedly found ourselves without outdoor lighting, Andy at AM Power stepped in without hesitation—offering the tower light, delivery, set-up and 24-hour support as an in-kind sponsorship contribution.

We are incredibly grateful for his kindness, generosity and willingness to help us at such short notice.

POWER AND LIGHTING SOLUTIONS

AM Power provides 24/7 power supply and lighting solutions, including generator hire, tower lighting, festoon lighting and bespoke lighting packages for outdoor functions, marquees, weddings and events.

**THANK YOU, AM POWER,
FOR HELPING US KEEP
THE EMBERS GLOWING.**



www.ampowerltd.co.uk



ampowerltd@outlook.com



0778820295165



MAPLEBECK TREE CARE

Helping us gather among the trees

A huge thank you to Rob and the Maplebeck Tree Care team, who have been saving logs from their woodland management work and have supported us by delivering them to workshop spaces throughout Walesby Forest.

Maplebeck Tree Care provides professional tree surgery and woodland management across Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, with conservation and preservation at the heart of its woodland management approach.

Their practical support has helped create places for us to sit, share and learn together. As you settle onto a log this weekend, spare a thought for the people whose generosity and hard work behind the scenes have helped bring our conference to life.

Rob of Maplebeck shares:

"We're proud to support an event that recognises the importance of children experiencing the outdoors first-hand. For us, it's about giving natural materials a new purpose and helping create opportunities for children to explore, be creative and learn through play. Supporting Forest School is a great way for us to contribute to something that encourages a lasting connection with the natural world."



MAPLEBECK
TREE CARE



<https://maplebecktreecare.uk/>



info@maplebecktreecare.co.uk



01777 228 325



MEET THE EMBER CREW

125

Behind every great conference is an incredible team of volunteers. From welcoming delegates and supporting workshops to decorating and making signs, making tea, solving problems and keeping the embers glowing, our Ember Crew are the heart of the weekend. If you see one of them, please stop and say hello—they're here to help make your conference experience unforgettable.



Emma Briscoe
Deputy FSA Chair



Mimi Eastell
FSA Conference
Coordinator



Danielle Earley
FSA Trustee



Matt Harder
FSA Chair



Frances Harris
FSA Trustee



Tilly Hogrebe
FSA Admin Coordinator



Lily Horseman
FSA Trustee



Mary Maclachlan
Weekend Wellbeing
support



Nell Seal
FSA Schemes Coordinator



Richard Smith
Health and safety



James Trotman
FSA Trustee



Ashley Wilson
FSA Trustee



Charlotte Antoniou
Volunteer Coordinator
Ember crew volunteer



Christine Banham
Ember crew volunteer



Gabriel Ciuffatelli
Navigational tool app
developer and workshop
mapping support



Judith Dutnall
Ember crew volunteer
Craft along, cosy corner
and workshop provider

MEET THE EMBER CREW

126



Bonnie Bond

Ember crew volunteer



Adriana Grau Oliver

Ember crew volunteer
Foliage



Jaime Gale

Ember crew volunteer
Opening and Closing
ceremony co-ordinator



Alice Husband

Ember crew volunteer



Jemma Holt

Ember crew volunteer



George Heathcote

Ember crew volunteer



Sharon Jesse

Ember crew volunteer
FSA Sussex Wild Tea cafe



Sarah Lenehan

Ember crew volunteer



Maxine Lock

Market Stall Coordinator



Liz Miles

Ember crew volunteer
FSA Sussex Wild tea
cafe



Christine Oliver

Ember crew volunteer



Emma Reeve

Ember crew volunteer
Editor and Navigation
tool app



Mel Vincent

Ember crew volunteer
FSA Sussex Wild tea cafe



Jude Vinton

Ember crew volunteer
FSA Sussex Wild tea cafe



Gem Webb

Ember crew volunteer



THANK YOU!

Thank you for being part of the FSA National Conference 2026.

A heartfelt thank you to our sponsors, volunteers, market stall holders and workshop providers, to the team at Walesby Forest and to everyone else who has helped to make Embers: The Power of Play such a special weekend. Whether you supported the event behind the scenes, shared your work, offered your skills and experience, or helped create a warm and welcoming community space – thank you!

A very special thank you to each and every one of our wonderful delegates!

We hope this conference has been a weekend of connection, new friendships, shared learning, inspiration and joyful moments.

You have helped make this gathering feel special, supportive and full of the power of play.

We hope to see you again next time!

Mimi and the team at the Forest School Association

We'd love to hear about your experience.

Conference Feedback Form

Scan to share your feedback

Your feedback helps shape future FSA conferences.



Embers: The Power of Play