

PRESS RELEASE

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www.thebigonehundred.co.uk

Ashdown Forest presents
The Big One Hundred
The next chapter for Ashdown Forest
Created & Produced by Trigger
Supported by Wealden District Council, Arts Council England & The Ashdown Forest Foundation



- 'The Big One Hundred' is a magical new story for Ashdown Forest, where interactive performances, heathland walks and shared encounters reveal a curious new creature and invite audiences to write the Forest's next chapter.
- Ashdown Forest in East Sussex, A.A. Milne's inspiration for the magical Hundred Acre Wood, is a rare heathland landscape - a habitat rarer than a tropical rainforest - and a Site of Special Scientific Interest that is home to some of Europe's most threatened species. Inspired by Winnie-the-Pooh, **Trigger** are creating a new tale for Ashdown Forest. From summer 2026, visitors will be invited to explore the forest and discover its newest inhabitant, a large-scale, mythical puppet creature inspired by the landscape and its unique species through a series of interactive performances generously supported by Wealden District Council.
- **Trigger** will also tour the new puppet creature to other local cultural and heritage sites in summer 2026, with dates and locations to be announced.
- **Five new walks** will open in Ashdown Forest, including the Forest's first all-weather walk, themed around different unique and threatened species native to the Forest, including the Dartford Warbler, the Silver-Studded Blue Butterfly, the Adder, the Tiger Beetle, and the Dormouse.

The Original Hundred Acre Wood

2026 marks 100 years since the publication of **A. A. Milne's** first collection of *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories. Rooted in Milne's life at **Ashdown Forest** in East Sussex and his adventures with his young son **Christopher Robin**, these tales transformed the landscape of the Forest into the magical **Hundred Acre Wood**. To celebrate the centenary, trailblazing artists **Trigger** (known for the large scale outdoor puppets such as *The Hatchling*, the world's largest human-operated puppet that led the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022) will present **The Big One Hundred**, a series of free cultural events at Ashdown Forest and throughout Sussex. This project is funded by Wealden District Council with support from The Ashdown Forest Foundation, whose investment will enable cultural experiences that celebrate heritage, inspire future generations and help protect the valuable landscape of Ashdown Forest.

Ashdown Forest, located in East Sussex, is one of the largest areas of rare lowland heathland in the Southeast and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its unique habitats and biodiversity. Once a medieval hunting forest, today it is celebrated for its wide, open heathland, ancient woodland, and rich wildlife. A habitat rarer than tropical rainforest, the unique heathland of Ashdown Forest is home to some of Europe's most threatened species.

A summer of outdoor play

In summer 2026, visitors will be invited to immerse themselves in the magical landscape where Christopher Robin played as a child through a series of interactive performances and events introducing the Forest's newest inhabitant '**The Curious Adventurer**'. Home of the Heffalump and Woozle, the Hundred Acre Wood was a land of mythical beasts. Designed by **Trigger**, the new creature will be a large-scale, playful puppet brought to life by 10 puppeteers, drawing on the characteristics of several species of animals found within the Forest. '**The Curious Adventurer**' will also travel the district, touring to local destination sites. Dates and locations to be announced soon.

In addition to the giant new inhabitant, five new **themed walks** will also be launched this summer, inviting audiences to explore more of the incredible landscape of Ashdown Forest. The walks will be themed around different special species including the **Dartford Warbler**, the **Tiger Beetle**, the **Adder**, the **Dormouse** and the **Silver Studded Blue Butterfly**.

Get involved

The public are invited to help bring the Forest's new creature to life, connecting children and young people with nature through play and imagination. Primary schools across Wealden will be offered free workshops, giving children the chance to draw their own version of the creature or write a story inspired by '**The Curious Adventurer**'. Members of the public across the country can also get involved by suggesting a name for the creature and submitting their own drawings and stories. Submissions can be shared with Trigger by tagging @TriggerStuff on Instagram, emailing hello@triggerstuff.co.uk, or using the hashtag #TheBigOneHundred.

The next chapter

These new walks and performances draw inspiration from the landscape that has inspired writers for generations from Milne to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to poet Fiona Sampson and encourage young people and families to connect with the Forest and shine a light on the urgent need to protect this magnificent landscape. 100 years ago, the real **Christopher Robin** played in **Ashdown Forest** and gained a deep, genuine connection with the

landscape, inspiring him to advocate for its conservation in later life. These site-specific cultural projects seek to reconnect young people with the wonder of the natural world, and in turn inspire the next generation of conservationists.

Angie Bual, Creative Director & Joint CEO of Trigger said:

“Trigger are delighted to be celebrating Ashdown Forest, where A.A Milne lived and wrote his beloved stories. A hundred years on, the Forest is still inspiring us with its unique landscape and special species. To celebrate this site of imagination we are weaving a new myth for this extraordinary landscape.

This project is about engaging people’s hearts and minds with the fact that Ashdown Forest is a national conservation site and that places like this are increasingly at risk. We need to inspire a new generation of people who will care for these landscapes over time.

Fewer and fewer young people are spending time in nature, and sites like the Ashdown Forest are seeing visitor numbers from families and children drop dramatically. So, we have to ask ourselves: what does the future look like if we don’t create opportunities for people to connect with nature? If we don’t actively bring the public into Ashdown Forest, its future is in jeopardy. Where will we be 100 years from today? And how do we ensure that same relationship with the natural world endures into the future?”

Mark Pearson, Chief Executive Officer at Ashdown Forest said:

“We are thrilled to be working with the team at Trigger to celebrate this cherished setting, ensuring its natural beauty and creative legacy endures for future generations. According to the English Nature Report, lowland heathland such as Ashdown Forest is rarer than rainforests; in the UK we have only about 16% left of the area that existed in 1800. The next generation will be vital in protecting this treasured landscape. We look forward to welcoming them as visitors who can follow in the footsteps of A. A Milne, discover a new story for the Forest, while witnessing the charm of the landscape and the need to look after it for the next 100 years to come.”

Councillor Rachel Millward, Deputy Leader of Wealden District Council, said:

“This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to celebrate a story cherished across the globe, while protecting the extraordinary landscape that inspired it. We’re proud to support a programme that honours our cultural heritage, brings communities together, and builds a lasting legacy for Ashdown Forest. Our investment is not just about marking a centenary - it’s about ensuring the Forest remains a place of wonder and learning for generations to come. With careful planning, strong partnerships, and local engagement, this project will create real and lasting benefits - environmentally, socially, and economically for the whole region.”

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Notes to Editors

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Further details about specific opening dates will be announced in due course.

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Ashdown Forest:

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Facebook: theconservatorsofashdownforest

Website: www.ashdownforest.org

Wealden District Council

Instagram: @wealdenc

Facebook: wealden

Website: www.wealden.gov.uk

Biographies

Trigger

Trigger are shapeshifting creatives who dream up, create and produce bold and brave live events. Trigger reimagine and revive public spaces, interrupt daily life, and put audiences and togetherness at the heart of everything they do. Their varied output, ranging from The Hatchling - a groundbreaking puppetry and kite flying experience - to PoliNations, a magical pop-up garden featuring five 11m high architectural trees and thousands of live plants and flowers, is inclusive, accessible and aims to shine a light on the creativity of local communities and underrepresented talent. Trigger is for everyone, and everyone is invited.

Ashdown Forest

Ashdown Forest, located in East Sussex, England, is one of the largest areas of rare lowland heathland in the Southeast and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its unique habitats and biodiversity. Once a medieval hunting forest, today it is celebrated for its wide, open heathland, ancient woodland, and rich wildlife, supporting species that are increasingly scarce across the UK. Owned by the Ashdown Forest Trust, it is managed by the Conservators of Ashdown Forest. Ashdown Forest was the real-life inspiration for the Hundred Acre Wood from A.A Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh books. The Ashdown Forest Foundation will mark the centenary year by raising awareness and funds for the Ashdown Forest 100 Year Legacy Fund.

Wealden District Council

Wealden District Council is a local government district in East Sussex and is the largest district in East Sussex covering 322.4 square miles and is home to 160,600 people. Two thirds of the District is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are 41 conservation areas and it has the largest amount of ancient woodland of any district in the country.