

**CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK  
STAKEHOLDER UPDATE  
October 2010**

This newsletter is to update stakeholders on work which has taken place since the July 2009 stakeholder update. Some items of general interest are also included.

**Vision Statement**

The revised Vision Statement was endorsed by all three district/borough councils and the County Council during summer 2009 and circulated to all stakeholders in September 2009.

**Strategy development/Topic Papers**

A Draft Strategy Brief was prepared by the County Council and put before the officer steering group in September 2009. Limitations on financial resources meant that there was insufficient funding available to commission the preparation of the Strategy and in May 2010 the decision was taken that steering group members should take the work forward as their other commitments permitted.

As part of this work two topic papers have been prepared and a third is in preparation. The first two of these papers are largely factual. Topic Paper 1 covers the origins and objectives of the Charnwood Forest Regional Park and Topic Paper 2 covers the planning process. Both are being sent with this update and will be posted on the County Council's website. Topic Paper 3 covers governance options and it is anticipated that this will be the subject of stakeholder consultation early in 2011.

**Planning policy work**

The County Council's *Minerals Development Framework* and *Waste Development Framework* were adopted in October 2009. Each includes a specific policy relating to development within or adjacent to Charnwood Forest.

The *Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy* was adopted in December 2009. It contains a Charnwood Forest policy based upon the Regional Park vision and objectives.

Work has continued on a common Core Strategy policy approach for Charnwood Borough and North West Leicestershire District Councils, and on the preparation of Core Strategy evidence bases.

The adopted policies are set out in detail in Topic Paper 2.

## **National level policy**

The Coalition Government has already introduced some changes to the planning system and more are expected next year. To date this has seen the abolition of the East Midlands Regional Assembly and revocation of the Regional Plan (albeit the evidence base contained within it can still be used by planning authorities). The latter change has raised issues for local planning authorities, particularly in respect of housing land supply and these may have a knock-on effect when it comes to them developing the suites of documents which comprise their Local Development Frameworks.

Early measures implemented by central government to address the economic situation have already impacted on local government budgets, and also on the levels of support for work linked to Charnwood Forest provided by organisations such as Natural England and the Government Office for the East Midlands. The Comprehensive Spending Review may well put further pressure on both local authority and other public body budgets.

The DEFRA discussion document *'An invitation to shape the Nature of England'* is open for consultation until 30th October 2010 as the first stage in the preparation of a White Paper on the Natural Environment. The White Paper will also be informed by *'Making Space for Nature - a review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Networks'* (the Lawton Report) published in September 2010. This report supports taking a landscape-scale approach to the conservation of the natural environment. One of its recommendations is for the implementation of twelve 'Ecological Conservation Zones' which would be established through a competitive process.

## **Leicestershire & Rutland Trust Living Landscapes project**

The Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust will be launching an important long-term partnership with Aggregate Industries in January 2011, aimed at delivering an ambitious Living Landscape scheme focussed on The Charnwood Forest.

Wildlife needs room to thrive and must have more opportunity to move across the countryside in order to adapt to whatever unpredictable conditions arise in the future.

Living Landscapes represents a bold vision of restoring, recreating and reconnecting fragmented habitats to create a resilient and healthy environment, highly valued and accessible for people; full of wildlife and rich in opportunities for learning, health and well being. This will require new thinking and fresh approaches.

## **East Midlands Woodland Bird Project**

Declines in woodland bird populations over the last 25 years are thought to be largely due to changes in woodland structure and lack of long-term management. The Forestry Commission East Midlands Region is offering financial support to landowners and managers to improve woodland habitats for sixteen vulnerable bird species including redstart, nightjar and spotted flycatcher. Measures which could be funded under this project include thinning, coppicing, creating woodland glades and preserving dead trees as nest sites. Grant aid is also available for the production of woodland management plans. For more details please see [www.forestry.gov.uk/eastmidswoodlandbirds](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/eastmidswoodlandbirds) or phone 01623 821474.

## **Sherwood Forest Regional Park**

As part of the Strategy development work, officers from the County Council met with John Everitt (Chief Executive of the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Chair of the Sherwood Forest Regional Park Board) in October 2009. Background research into the remits and governance structures of other projects has also been ongoing, including discussions with officers involved with the potential Brecks Regional Park and the successful Wyre Forest Landscape Partnership.

## **Funding bid**

In January 2010 Leicestershire County Council, Charnwood Borough Council and the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust jointly submitted a bid for funding to the 6Cs Strategic GI Board. The bid was called Gateways to Charnwood Forest and focussed on access improvement and site management works at Jubilee Wood, the Outwoods and Charnwood Lodge. Unfortunately this bid was unsuccessful.

## **Geology and Landscape Exhibition**

Stakeholders were notified in March 2010 of the travelling display produced by Leicestershire County Council, Natural England and the British Geological Survey celebrating the geology of Charnwood Forest, and the way in which the geology influences the landscape and the uses that people make of the Forest.

The exhibition was launched at Loughborough Library in April 2010 and has since been touring libraries within the Forest area. It will be on display at Snibston during November and December 2010, coinciding with an exhibition celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Loughborough Naturalists' Club. During January 2011 the exhibition will be at Coalville Library and in July and August 2011 it will be at Charnwood Museum.

If you have a public venue that would be interested in hosting the exhibition for a minimum of two weeks during the remainder of 2011, please get in touch.

### **Presentations**

Members of the officer steering group gave presentations about the Regional Park to the Friends of Charnwood Forest in September 2009 and to Loughborough Rotary Club in January 2010.

### **Stakeholder meeting**

At the time of the July 2009 stakeholder update it was intended to hold a further stakeholder meeting once consultants has been appointed to develop a Strategy. It is now our intention to arrange this event in early 2011 as part of the consultation on governance options. As at previous meetings we would also expect to have some presentations of general interest and your suggestions for these would be welcomed.

### **Contact details**

For any of the items above, please contact Lesley Eddleston on 0116 305 7067 or at [lesley.eddleston@leics.gov.uk](mailto:lesley.eddleston@leics.gov.uk).