

LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM – 25TH FEBRUARY 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE – NATIONAL FOREST

Purpose of Report

1. To seek members support for the work of the National Forest to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee inquiry.

Background Information

2. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has been considering the future of the National Forest, focusing on the implementation of the National Forest Company's Delivery Plan for 2009-2014
3. The delivery plan sets out the proposals for the Forest to continue to develop to 2014 and beyond. It also sets out how the National Forest Strategy (2004-14) will continue to be implemented.

The Main Access & Recreation Proposals

4. The National Forest Strategy included a range of proposals on access and recreation in the area. There was also recognition of the need for recreational opportunities on new forest sites. The Strategy did commit the Forest to encourage access to sites in perpetuity and where appropriate dedicate areas for open access. The Forest also supported the work of the County Council in improving and waymarking the local network and gave an undertaking to promote and provide both local, medium and a long distance trails.
5. The delivery plan for the next five years states that the Forest will seek to
 - Develop new trails between sites and urban areas
 - Develop a National Forest Long Distance Path
 - Maintain existing linear access on sites
 - Work with the commercial sector to encourage new sporting and recreation facilities
6. The key working relationships will include the National Forest Company Access and Recreation Group, including the development and implementation of an Access and Recreation Plan.

Progress

7. The National Forest is an ongoing project. Already more than 7 million trees have been planted and woodland cover in the area has increased from 6% to 18%. It is estimated that more than 80% of forest sites have some form of access.
8. The Leicestershire Local Access forum (LAF) has, like the Forest strategy identified the need to link sites with people along access corridors.

Recommendations

9. The L.A.F. informs EFRA that it is pleased with the work and progress on the new National Forest in the region.
10. The Forum asks to continue to be actively involved in future consultations. This should include the proposals set out in delivery plan and that recreational access continues to be a key part in the delivery of a New National Forest for the nation.

Officer to Contact

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