

## **REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CULTURE COMMITTEE**

### **PROPOSALS FOR SHERWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on proposals for establishing a Sherwood Forest Regional Park.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. The importance of Sherwood to Nottinghamshire and the need to work collaboratively have long been recognised. In 1974, local authorities and other partners worked together to publish the Sherwood Forest Study and this was followed by many years of partnership working on a whole range of plans and programmes.
3. A major opportunity to deliver some of the ambitions for Sherwood came with the BIG Lottery £50m Living Landmarks programme and the broad partnership that came together for the Living Legend bid. Although the Living Legend bid was not successful, the strength of the partnership was such that it has delivered a step change in collaborative working and shared ambitions for Sherwood, culminating in proposals to create a Regional Park.
4. Regional Parks, unlike National Parks, are not statutory designations and have no fixed definition but are based on local characteristics and aspirations. They have been established across the UK and Europe and all use environmental enhancements as the foundation for economic and social improvements. They have no formal planning powers but can help to co-ordinate approaches to planning whilst retaining local flexibility and democratic accountability.
5. The reasons for establishing Regional Parks are diverse, reflecting local challenges and opportunities. All, however, have a common aim to create a shared vision that recognises the special character and heritage of the area and adds value through increased co-operation and co-ordination across boundaries and between sectors and through the adoption of a long-term and strategic approach. The value of the Regional Park is, therefore, significantly greater than the sum of its parts.
6. Under the aegis of the former Living Legend Project Management Board, Nottinghamshire County Council commissioned a Regional Park feasibility study in 2008. This was undertaken jointly by Hallam Environmental Consultants Ltd

and Sheffield Hallam University and reported favourably, setting out the aspirations for the establishment of Sherwood Forest Regional Park. Elected Members were consulted through a seminar and workshop.

7. Since the publication of the Feasibility Study, the Project Management Board (PMB) has formed a shadow Regional Park Board to take forward the development of a draft Vision Statement, Regional Park boundary and broad objectives. Current membership of the Board is listed at Appendix 1 and the proposed Regional Park Boundary is included at Appendix 2.

8. The Vision that has been developed is for *“a future for the Sherwood Forest area where the outstanding natural and cultural heritage is nationally and internationally recognised – where vibrant communities, economic regeneration and environmental enhancement thrive together in this inspiring natural setting”*.

The Vision is supported by four broad objectives:

Objective 1 - To manage, enhance and promote the landscape character of the Forest, including its biodiversity and geodiversity.

Objective 2 - To manage, enhance and promote the historic character of the Forest, its settlements, heritage assets and culture, including its industrial heritage.

Objective 3 - To promote sustainable leisure and tourism.

Objective 4 - To support agricultural diversification, woodland and rural economy uses which respect local character.

9. Partners have also identified the following key benefits that a Regional Park could bring:

- Improvements for the environment, social well being and the local economy.
- Coordination of delivery across the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- Potential for more sustainable income generation and inward investment.
- Opportunities for job creation, training and skills.
- Linking Sherwood Forest to its gateway towns and villages and to historic Nottingham.
- Adding value by facilitating the delivery of existing organisations rather than duplicating effort.
- Bringing new resources by providing the partnership basis for bids that is required by major sources of funding.
- Supporting economic development in line with Regional park objectives.
- Ensuring a consistent approach to planning across authorities.
- Helping to protect and enhance the internationally renowned assets.
- Providing a coordinated approach to landscape restoration.
- Supporting a coherent marketing of the Sherwood Forest offer.
- Enabling an effective attract & disperse marketing strategy.
- Creating the context for speciality local brands.
- Unlocking potential new markets for agricultural and forestry products.

10. Having developed the Vision and Objectives, work is now underway with local planning authorities to ensure that policies consistent with the Vision and Objectives of the Regional Park are embedded in Local Plans. This aims to provide consistency and ensure co-ordination and co-operation whilst retaining local flexibility and democratic accountability to reflect local differences and

priorities. A funding group has also been established to explore funding opportunities for delivery of some of the key objectives.

11. In order to move forward with Regional Park designation, formal endorsement of the Vision, objectives and boundary by all partners is required. This is not a statutory designation, such as those for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty but Local Authorities have a key role in providing formal backing for the establishment of the Regional Park and in helping to take it forward. A Board that is properly constituted and representative of all the key sectors can then be formed and tasked with investigating how the Regional Park can be co-ordinated to ensure that it achieves its objectives.
12. There are a number of models for Regional Park co-ordination in existence but partners are agreed that any preferred solution for Sherwood will take a light-touch approach. Once the Board has completed its investigation into possible models, a further report will be brought to Members for consideration.

### **Other Options Considered**

13. The County Council could choose not to support the process of Regional Park designation. As one of the leading partners in the current work, if the County Council does not support the proposed designation, the remaining partners could still choose to move forward but it is considered unlikely that they will do so and the opportunities a Regional Park could bring to the area will be lost.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

14. The proposal to designate a Sherwood Forest Regional Park and the vision and objectives for that Regional Park are consistent with the County Council's Strategic Priorities 2010-14, specifically Priority Two: to promote the economic prosperity of Nottinghamshire and to safeguard our environment.
15. The tourism, community, environment, voluntary, statutory, local authority and land management representatives currently engaged with the process have identified that a Sherwood Forest Regional Park could offer the opportunity to deliver benefits across sectors and at a greater scale than is achievable through existing partnerships. It will also bring greater recognition for the existing activities of partners in contributing to the overall Vision for Sherwood, whilst at the same time retaining local flexibility and democratic accountability. This identification of the potential added value of a Sherwood Forest Regional Park by cross-sectoral partners, alongside the consistency with the County Council's Strategic Priorities, has informed the recommendation to support the process of Regional Park designation.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below.

Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

17. All partners recognise that the co-ordination of the Regional Park will need to be resourced and the difficulty of doing so from existing budgets. It is intended to task the Board with investigating how this can be achieved to ensure the delivery of the required benefits in the most cost-effective manner.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

1. To note the work to date on proposals for establishing a Sherwood Forest Regional Park.
2. To approve County Council support for the process of Regional Park designation.
3. To endorse the Vision and Objectives for the proposed Regional Park.

**Councillor John Cottee**  
**Chairman of the Culture Committee**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Heather Stokes,  
Conservation Team Manager (0115 969 6508)**

### **Constitutional Comments (SG 01/06/2012)**

18. The Committee is the appropriate body to consider the matters set out in this Report.

### **Financial Comments (MA 07.06.2012)**

19. Existing resources will be utilised to support the Regional Park designation process.

### **Background Papers**

Sherwood Forest Regional Park Feasibility Study  
Sherwood Forest Regional Park Vision Statement

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Ashfield and Gedling Divisions plus Ollerton, Rufford, Southwell & Caunton, Farnsfield, Calverton, Rufford and Radcliffe-on-Trent Divisions.

## **Shadow Regional Park Board**

The Membership currently comprises

- § Elected Members and officers from
  - Nottinghamshire County Council (Councillor John Cottee, Sally Gill/ Heather Stokes, Patrick Candler)
  - Gedling Borough Council (Councillor Darrell Pulk) and
  - Newark & Sherwood District Council (Councillor Roger Blaney, Andy Norton)
- § representatives from
  - Campaign to Protect Rural England (Charlotte Elliott)
  - Edwinstowe Parish Council (Councillor John Peck)
  - Experience Nottinghamshire (Jennifer Spencer)
  - Forestry Commission (Jo Atkinson)
  - Friends of Greenwood Forum (Colin Barson)
  - Greenwood Community Forest (Malcolm Hackett)
  - Groundwork
  - Natural England (Tom Moat, David Kingsley-Rowe),
  - National Trust (Beth Dawson)
  - Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (John Everitt)
  - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Colin Wilkinson)
  - Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire ( Rob Crowder)
  - Sherwood Forest Trust (Lewis Walker, Julie Rusby)
  - Thoresby Estates (also representing Country Land and Business Association) (Nick Brown)
  - Woodland Trust

New Board members are actively being sought to ensure that the views of all sectors are represented.

## Proposed Regional Park Boundary

