

Sherwood Forest Visitors Centre - Results of Consultation

19 February 2009

1 Introduction

1.1 This report summarises the outcomes of the consultation with stakeholders and the community on the proposals for the new visitor centre at Sherwood Forest.

1.2 The consultation consisted of:

a) The plans being presented and discussed by Nottinghamshire County Councillors and senior members of the project team with the following stakeholder groups in December 2008:

Wednesday 10 Ollerton and Boughton Town Council

Monday 15 Edwinstowe Parish Council

Tuesday 16 Regional Park Stakeholders Group

Thursday 18 Members Reference Group

There was unanimous support with all groups endorsing the plans.

b) Production of a leaflet which included the artist's impression, the floor plan, background information, answers to frequently asked questions and a tear off questionnaire for people to complete and return at the public events or post back using a freepost address. In addition to being used at the public exhibitions, copies were distributed to the County's major libraries, County Contact points, Nottingham Central Library, Nottingham Tourist Office, Ollerton Tourist Information Centre, Nottingham Castle and the current visitor centre at Sherwood Forest

c) A 10 day public exhibition included displays of the artist's impression, site plan, floor plan and background information at the following venues in January 2009:

Monday 12 Edwinstowe Library

Tuesday 13 Edwinstowe Library

Wednesday 14 Ollerton Library

Friday 16 Worksop Library

Saturday 17 Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre

Sunday 18 Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre

Monday 19 Mansfield Library

Tuesday 20 Mansfield Library

Thursday 22 Rufford Craft Centre

Friday 23 West Bridgford Library

All events were staffed with colleagues involved in the project to discuss the plans and answer any questions. Throughout this period the same information was on display in Nottingham Central Library.

- d) From the end of December 2008 the public exhibitions were promoted with posters and flyers advertising the dates and venues. These were displayed at the County's major libraries, County Contact points, and businesses in the centre of Edwinstowe. Advertisements were placed in the following local newspapers for week commencing 5 January: Mansfield Chad, Nottingham Evening Post, Newark Advertiser, Hucknall and Bulwell Dispatch, Worksop Guardian, Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser, and the Retford Times. A press release was also issued to all local media.
- e) All information and plans were published on the Nottinghamshire County Council website with the questionnaire available as an online form.

2 How did people respond?

- 2.1 The 235 people who completed the questionnaire used the following method of return:

<i>Postal</i>	15%
<i>Event</i>	69%
<i>Internet</i>	16%

3 How do respondents currently use the centre?

- 3.1 Response to the questions 'when did you last visit the existing Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre?' were as follows:

<i>In the last week</i>	31.4%
<i>In the last month</i>	20.2%
<i>In the last year</i>	26.0%
<i>In the last five years</i>	12.4%
<i>Over five years ago</i>	3.7%
<i>Never been</i>	3.3%

- 3.2 Response to the questions 'how do you travel to the visitor centre?' were as follows:

<i>Car</i>	75.2%
<i>Bus</i>	6.6%
<i>Walk</i>	20.7%
<i>Cycle</i>	12.4%
<i>Train</i>	0%
<i>Other</i>	1.2%

4 How do people view the plans?

4.1 On the question 'Would you be more inclined to visit the new visitor centre than the existing one?' the response was:

5	<i>More likely to visit</i>	43.6%
4		25.4%
3		24.1%
2		2.5%
1	<i>Less likely to visit</i>	4.2%

4.2 On the question 'What is your view on the proposed plans for the new visitor centre?' the response was:

5	<i>Strongly Support</i>	64.9%
4		18.8%
3		8.9%
2		2.5%
1	<i>Strongly Oppose</i>	4.7%

4.3 The following responses to the above question, divided into the different methods of return demonstrate that those who had attended the events and gained a fuller understanding of the project supported it still more positively.

Postal

5	<i>Strongly Support</i>	58.8%
4		20.5%
3		8.8%
2		2.9%
1	<i>Strongly Oppose</i>	8.8%

Event

5	<i>Strongly Support</i>	69.5%
4		18.2%
3		8.5%
2		2.4%
1	<i>Strongly Oppose</i>	1.2%

Internet

5	<i>Strongly Support</i>	48.6%
4		18.9%
3		10.8%
2		5.4%
1	<i>Strongly Oppose</i>	16.2%

5 What facilities should be included inside the new visitor centre?

- 5.1 The questionnaire included a list of facilities which are planned for the new visitor centre and respondents were asked which ones they would like to see included:

<i>Gift Shop</i>	68.6%
<i>Weddings/Functions</i>	30.2%
<i>Tourist Information</i>	82.6%
<i>Conference/Corporate</i>	28.9%
<i>Visitor Experience</i>	71.1%
<i>Restaurant</i>	65.3%
<i>Café</i>	83.9%
<i>Classroom</i>	57.0%
<i>Toilets</i>	86.8%
<i>Other</i>	31.4%

The 'other' suggestions are shown in appendix 1

6 Design of the building?

- 6.1 The questionnaire included a list of design factors to be considered for the new visitor centre and respondents were asked which ones they considered to be important:

<i>Environmentally Sustainable</i>	78.1%
<i>Modern Design</i>	35.5%
<i>Visually sympathetic to the surrounding area</i>	83.9%
<i>Built using traditional materials</i>	66.1%
<i>Ease of access</i>	63.2%
<i>Other</i>	14.0%

The 'other' suggestions are shown in appendix 2

7 Other ideas/comments?

- 7.1 Finally respondents were asked for any further comments, ideas or suggestions. These are shown in appendix 3

Appendix 1

Other suggestions for facilities inside the new centre

Undercover picnic facility, childrens hands-on activities, play area for under 5's.

Presentations, Conferences, corporate, interactive displays

Covered outdoor eating area for dog walkers which is smoke free

Cycle hire

More trees

Environmental exhibition

Theatre

Availability of safe areas to minimise the impact on traffic

Childrens play area

Wildlife viewpoints

Robin Hood themed entertainment

More entertainment sessions

Specific information - hands on for children

Audio walks, history anecdotes etc

Infant buggy hire

Local relevant arts & craft displays & stalls/shops

Modern eco systems

Volunteer office

Accommodation for volunteer weekends etc

Environmental/ecological programme or courses for adults

Walking & leisure information

Natural history information

Small child play area, cycle hire here or nearby

Costume - archery area events

Much later opening hours for restaurant etc

Information linking Edwinstowe village and craft centre etc

Environmental Centre - raise awareness of the forest and nature

Wheelchair loans

Archery Centre

Dog friendly, inside eating areas, not smoking

Eating protected from bad weather for picnics as well as outdoor facilities

Details about church

Classroom to include facilities for making bird boxes, Xmas decorations

Open air theatre

Treetop walkway

More wildlife related activities

Room for school parties to eat packed lunch

Heritage Room for Edwinstowe

Bar

Natural play park

Childrens zoo

Medieval settlement

Encourage voluntary participation

Recycling centre

Hotel/childrens indoor outdoor play

Indoor dry area for dog walkers to sit in bad weather and have coffee etc

Shop with books and other relevant material

Wildlife info, affordable food for families

Shop selling fairtrade/environmentally friendly clothing and walking shoes

Visitor/friends membership

Wildlife/nature displays

Facilities for dog walkers

Relocation of world of Robin Hood from Maid Marion Way in Nottingham

Tour guide/interactive displays

Transport around the Forest mini railway

Arts/identification of flora./fauna/birdsong, trees etc

Decent high quality food

Disability access to all amenities

Appendix 2

Other suggestions for the design of the new building

To use local firms in its construction

Retail area including literature area covering the legend and ecology of the area

Flat rolling access to all areas. No steps

Should reflect areas history

Good signage

Cars avoiding the village

Good to look at

It should be a destination on its own to protect the forest in wet weather

Low impact on existing village

A showcase of green sustainability

Dog friendly in parts

Build in wood

Sufficient parking

Free to all

Something to be proud of

Cost to taxpayer

Accessible to women and children

Plenty of free parking

Outlets for locally produced food

No useless space - needs to be exciting and encourage repeat visits

Dramatic

That it stays in the Sherwood Forest area

Shouldn't be noticeably different - a park is a natural place and shouldn't be in competition

Appendix 3

Any other ideas/comments

Catering facility to include option in different environment for families/walkers etc. Maybe Bistro type area/food serving other than carvery/sandwiches/chips. Examples: Lime House, Dukeries Garden Centre Area, Bay Tree, Thoresy Courtyard

Edwinstowe

Horse & cart, pony & trap, electric buggy - possible help to get less able/ mobile folk to get to Major Oak. Car parking - concrete/metal/rubber mesh with grass growing between rather than block areas of tarmac/concrete & subsequent drainage problem. Hope it all goes ahead successfully! A much improved scheme

Mansfield

After visiting the display at Rufford today the centre looks very good and should be supported

Ollerton

A sheltered and covered eating area by the cafe to enable walkers to sit with their dogs whilst enjoying refreshments from the cafe. The shelter could be covered with a solar panel roof which could create cover for the shelter and hot water for the cafe. This shelter should be a smoke free area

A small cafe and toilets for everyone to use near the major oak. There is sometimes a ice-cream van in the area and picnic benches already on the grass

Mansfield

Will there be a dedicated website including a webcam and blogs during the construction of the new visitor centre. Is there, or will there be a supportive "friends" group?

Castleford, West Yorkshire

More events - more woodland - more works & something in Nottingham

Nottingham

There seems to be a series of ponds in the form of a sustainable urban drainage system but nowhere for the water to drain away. Such a drainage system would be in attaining a pollution free run off from the car parking and buildings. There does not appear to be solar hot water panels shown on the plan, these will be vital to attain eco credibility

Retford

Catering outlets to sell high-quality food. Restaurant to be open in the evening. Centre needs to encourage repeat visits by e.g. having temporary exhibitions, high quality events. Friends membership and/or annual season tickets. Please remember this should be a centre for everyone and not just for families

Beeston

Presumably the bridge from the visitors centre to the forest is intended to cater for pedestrians, cyclists and invalid scooters. If this is the case a wide bridge will be required to allow 2 invalid scooters and other bridge users to pass and also to segregate pedestrians from cyclists who will ride despite being asked to dismount. Will passing traffic under the bridge be safeguarded from objects being dropped over the sides of the bridge? Will a safe crossing be provided at road level for those choosing or not able to use the bridge?

Retford

Looks good!

Mansfield Woodhouse

Cant wait to visit!

Eastwood

Please dont close the B6034

Edwinstowe

I look forward to seeing the fruition of the plans, very attractive design

Mansfield

I think this is a wonderful scheme and should be a great benefit to the area and to the whole County

Nottingham

It will be great

Killamarsh

Very modern incorporating good facilities. Good use of sustainable materials

Clipstone

This looks really good - I hope it goes ahead soon!

Edwinstowe

I like this proposal much more than the last one

Edwinstowe

Well presented

Edwinstowe

Strongly support - looks really exciting
Warsop

I think the design of the new centre is excellent and it blends in well with the area/surroundings
New Ollerton

Keep it as natural as possible - no ugly metal trees!!
Nottingham

Great innovative design, really fits in with surroundings
West Bridgford

Would like the shuttle bus to Newark from Sherwood Centre brought back in service

The history of the forest and future management should be described for children
West Bridgford

Nearby facilities for camping
West Bridgford

Excellent project - concentrate on the ecology of the forest
Nottingham

Tree top walk - re-enactments with Robin Hood for his times
Arnold

Covered BBQ area, more toilets. Something for kids between age of 10 and 15, e.g. go ape at Sherwood pines. Do something with the lake area, e.g. boats. Area for archery, don't forget people are coming to see Robin Hood, don't be boring!

Please use local bricks, Kirton, not the wood and breeze of energy village
Ollerton

Link up to the cycle route, signposts etc
Woodsetts

We need much more, rebuild Nottingham Castle on the site - a cycle hire centre - picnic area
Worksop

Parking permits for residents. Toilets to be available when the centre is closed. Closing the centre at 5 pm in summer is very short-sighted when often the area is busier during the evening than the daytime. Edwinstowe

I believe the modern design and sustainable use of resources will bring and please more visitors

Forest Town

Don't let it blast all over the village, let it keep itself to itself

Edwinstowe

Signs etc to boost income to Edwinstowe Village etc

Edwinstowe

Compost toilets, recycled water, turf roof etc. Please research centre for alternative technology for information on best practice.

Edwinstowe

Why did you change design? Make sure it is open for 2012 - is this really going to happen? Inclusive areas.

Edwinstowe

I think its important to decide whether this centre supports the forest or becomes an attraction in its own right. I think it should support the forest.

Edingley

Robin Hood festival over 2 weekends plus in the week

Edwinstowe

Dog exercise areas. More signage in surrounding forest. Picnic / consuming own food area

Rotherham

Access for dog walkers. Environmental extension covering topics around forest degradation & protection

Beverley

Sat navs will direct people through the village rather than following signage. Improve junction at Rose Cottage traffic lights. Education needs to compliment Perlethorpe Centre

Edwinstowe

A good playground with ropes to swing on and climbing frames

Play area as on similar lines to that at Carsington Water. Covered picnic area

New walking routes around the forest - in addition to those already marked.

Nottingham

Great play areas would be a good idea. Also picnic areas. The visitor experience area looks too small - too much space for retail & restaurant

Southwell

Variety of marked paths for walking, different lengths (separate from cycle paths)

Arnold, Nottingham

Pedestrian bridge is essential for easy access. Should not be discarded if cuts need to be made

Clipstone

Low energy/sustainable energy to power new visitor centre. Use of latest eco technology. A scheme whereby the public have the opportunity to become friends of the new Sherwood Forest visitor Centre might be a means of raising some revenue.

Nottingham

Public transport from surrounding areas. Hire of mobility vehicles

Sheffield

We do not agree that the present visitor centre looks tired. We like the fact it has a relaxed atmosphere for both adults and children, and hi-tech surroundings would be out of place here.

Mansfield Woodhouse

An area that could accommodate caravan/tents etc where we could come for the weekend. We are caravan ralliers and always on the look out for venues preferably with a hall for hire.

Bingham

Childfriendly etc. be proud of it when people come from all over the world.

Mansfield

Cafe area suitable for people with dogs. Ample car parking

Sheffield

I would like to see more wildlife and more activities for young and old. The development of special interest groups such as bird, insect and flora groups would be good. A free bus from Mansfield would bring in more visitors.

Mansfield

Make sure that there are plenty of female toilets and keep the green roof.

Radcliffe on Trent

Plenty of female toilets. Like it very much. Please get on with it

Radcliffe on Trent

Review of transport accessibility required, train, road bus. Closer links with City. Children's play area to include wooden huts with medieval theme.

Mansfield

Would be nice to have 1 or 2 lodges for weekend stays - would help bring in revenue. Sensory experience area for special needs. Signs also written in other languages.

Rotherham

Public phone needed in welcome area

Invite residents of retirement cottages to lunch when project is completed

Motor home parking

More local events during Wherood Forester period. More services to Clumber Thoresby Market

New Ollerton

What about access by rail from the colliery line joined to the Robin Hood line

Edwinstowe

Please keep the Robin Hood Posters that are at present in the cafe. More routes for cyclists

Mansfield Woodhouse

Think about the surrounding infrastructure. Ollerton roundabout, Rose Cottage junction, Edwinstowe crossroads. More visitors will increase the traffic at these places.

Edwinstowe

More cycle routes in forest.

Mansfield Woodhouse

More routes for cycles

The centre will attract a lot of cars to the area and may have an adverse effect on the environment. Better public transport links need to be thought about

Sheffield

Integration with Sustrans for cyclist visitors who may arrive by car

Clipstone

If encouraging visitors to use the A616 to access Swinecote Road the junction of the two roads needs improvement. From Worksop side, the precise junction is

difficult to determine particularly at night. Lights would be great but even a few posts with reflectors would be sufficient.

Edwinstowe

We would not mind paying a nominal amount when visiting for the general upkeep of the centre (donation box)

Mansfield

To raise additional funding you could get people to sponsor a tree etc to commemorate a memorable event

Ravenshead, Notts

Are you improving the road network?

Edwinstowe

Road leading in/out will require traffic control due to location next to cricket pitch

Edwinstowe

There is a Forest School that is part of the local playgroup which has 2 and a half hours in the forest using imagination and play.

Edwinstowe

Have safe cycle routes from all local towns to encourage green travel. Have an outdoor centre for schools and groups to visit and stay over to experience outdoor living!

Kettering, Northants

However if NCC get their incinerator in Rainworth this new venture will be tarnished by the effects of the toxic fumes from incinerator destroying Sherwood Forest

Rainworth

Move car parking area?

Edwinstowe

Medieval settlement tastefully done (see indian settlement in Uusemite National Park USA) Mediaeval food in the restaurant. Tree top walk to attract visitors worldwide

Mansfield

Medieval village setting to interest younger visitors medieval menu in restaurant

Perhaps could encourage music, theatrical events. Also in adjacent field , charity micro light flights.

To have guided walks available by someone expert on Sherwood Forest and its habitat - for a small charge to join the walk therefore further raising awareness and funds.

Aston, Sheffield

Need a help point button at the major oak (like in car park) to alert a ranger at the visitor centre of vandalism / fire. Need decent gifts in gift shop. Many have been in there for years. Need a modern contemporary visitor exhibition display to engage children in history and conservation. Need signs in several useful areas

Edwinstowe

Please make an effort and continue to keep it clean and maintained so it is not an embarrassment to our country as most English buildings, including Robin Hood Centre that's now gone. Thank god!

Arnold

Listen to staff comments

Edwinstowe

Would be nice to see restaurant/cafe museum more traditional like an old tavern for example. Don't make too modern in looks.

Hope present cafe staff will be retained as meals, service, friendliness, comfort are excellent. Hope that its not too far from Major Oak. Hope that dog walkers many who come daily, all year, will be welcome and have good facilities

Shuttlewood, Chesterfield, Derbys

Make it fun, interactive, informative, Robin Hood Exhibition at Castle last year very good

Lowdham

At the old centre the women's and men's toilets were same size. Please ensure enough facilities for women and children who tend to be with women. Welcoming to people of different cultures, ethnicities and nationalities

Nottingham City

The drop in visitor numbers is probably due to £3 parking charge. It seems unfair to make people pay this for a stroll in the countryside. It would be better to get people to spend more money in the shops as a fundraiser. Current gift shop sells things for kiddies and old people - which is fine for them but I wouldn't bother

Forest Town, Mansfield

We already have congested roads through the village at various times and will often find leaving the side roads almost impossible. The Ollerton roundabout problem needs to be swiftly addressed and also the flooding problem on

Swincoat Road. Free parking permits at busy times would be welcomed by residents.

Edwinstowe

I really like the S for Sherwood design. School visits should be an important part of the scheme. I think this design has been extremely well thought out. Regular events held (like the Eden Project) would be good

Hucknall

More conservation of the Forest and heathland!

Worksop

As a weekly visitor I feel very strongly against a new centre and think the idea is far too modern to naturally fit in with the area. I love how it is now traditional with plenty of character. Why not save loads of money and just improve the existing site. People who regularly use it now really don't like the whole idea of the new centre.

Swallownest – Sheffield

Periodic showing of films involving the Legend of Robin Hood. Documentaries featuring Medieval Britain. Films/documentaries featuring Nottinghamshire famous people and places

Walesby

A place to sit out of the weather that you can have a drink or a meal if you have a dog with you

Clipstone village

Create more multiuse (bike/walk/horse) paths in the Forest please

Mansfield

Bike tracks increased

Mansfield

You could guide the visitor centre as a "Earth Home" like the environmental attraction at Onibury nr Ludlow, Shropshire. Education building important as a lot of midland schools could use the facility.

Worcester

A caravan and camping site would be very welcome for lots of visitors, swimming pool as well.

Nottingham

Bicycle hire - small party walks with a woodsman/forester. Separate area for kids please in cafe. More seating areas outside. Quality handmade unique goods of natural materials which are useful, but affordable

Gainsborough

Less hard surfaces for car parking. No gravel/chips on areas outside the main building (wheelchair friendly)

Mansfield Woodhouse

Please make sure it is a decent cafe - the one at Attenborough Nature Reserve is a good example

Not the most exciting building but an improvement on the existing

Trent Bridge, Nottingham

Occasional themed guided walks, e.g. flora, fungi, bird recognition, insect life etc

Mansfield

A friend from the Black Isle (NE Scotland) visited with me the present SF Visitor Centre in October 08. Her only plea was for the loan of an electric scooter please?

Woodborough

I do not want to see Sherwood become too commercialised. Personally I like it as it is, has all one needs. Good parking area, many beautiful walks, toilet facilities. An excellent cafe offering very good food at affordable prices and kept spotless. Scooter hire would be nice

Dronfield, Derbys

Very pleasant concept that has low impact on the natural environment. Can only be good for the area. Would like to see an improvement in Public Transport to the Centre. Again environmentally sustainable.

Ollerton

Better public transport access to Sherwood Forest

Beeston

Much better than one that failed in its money bid in 2008

Worksop

If everything is being moved across the road what will happen to the Major Oak - surely one of the main attractions of the visitor centre?

Mansfield

A building to look like a tree showing the legend of Robin Hood

Boughton

Keep Sherwood Forest as a historical landmark - don't try to make it 21st century at the risk of destroying exactly what it is all about, about what it stands for - local heritage

Its very important for the success of the whole of Sherwood Forest that the new Centre doesn't just attract visitors, but it disperses them around the area.

Nottingham

Good to have some form of demonstration area to see crafts and environmental work presently carried out or weaponry demonstrations from Robin Hoods era. Part of the proposal appeared to state that the retail facility would not be competing with local traders. When I first read it I thought it was going to say that they would be stocking/promoting locally produced goods.

Mapperley