

Heart of National Forest Foundation and National Forest Company
**UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL - VISION AND ACTION PLAN
FOR HEART OF THE NATIONAL FOREST**



TYM & PARTNERS
Planners and Development Economists



**LOCKHART
GARRATT**
TREES • WOODLAND • FORESTRY

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The Study Documents

The presentation of this study findings have been broken down into the following:

Volume One - Executive Summary

Volume Two - Context, Analysis and Vision

Volume Three - Action Plan

Volume Four - Self Catering Accommodation Outline Business Plan

Volume Five - Woodland and Countryside Management Outline Business Plan

Volume Six - Mobile Explorer Outline Business Plan

Technical Appendix - Technical information and case studies

1 THE ACTION PLAN

Vision and Themes for the Heart of the National Forest

- 1.1 To meet these challenges the vision for the HNF is:

The Vision

The Heart of the National Forest in 2026 is an exciting new forest landscape. It supports a successful forest economy and is a major tourist and leisure destination. The former industrial landscape has been successfully restored to create a highly attractive, well managed environment, providing an employment base for local people. The Heart of the National Forest celebrates its heritage, supports strong communities, and is adapted to climate change. It has a strong sense of place and identity which is inspiring for its residents and visitors.

The Themes

- 1.2 There are four themes to guide the delivery of the Vision; some of these have sub themes. These are listed below and summarised in Figure 2:

Policy Matters

Aim: Ensure the potential of the Heart is recognised in key policy documents

This has one sub theme: *Mainstream potential into policy.*

Partnership Matters

Aim: Continue to work in Partnership to realise the Vision

This has one theme: *Symbiotic partnerships*

Prosperity Matters

Aim: Unlock the new economic potential of a diversified Forest economy.

This has four sub themes which are:

- *Tourism* - Moving from an emerging visitor destination to an established destination.
- *Woodland and Environmental Economy* - Developing a woodland and environmental economy.
- *Leisure Economy* - Developing a new exciting leisure economy.
- *Stronger Communities* - Addressing inequalities and building strong, healthy communities.

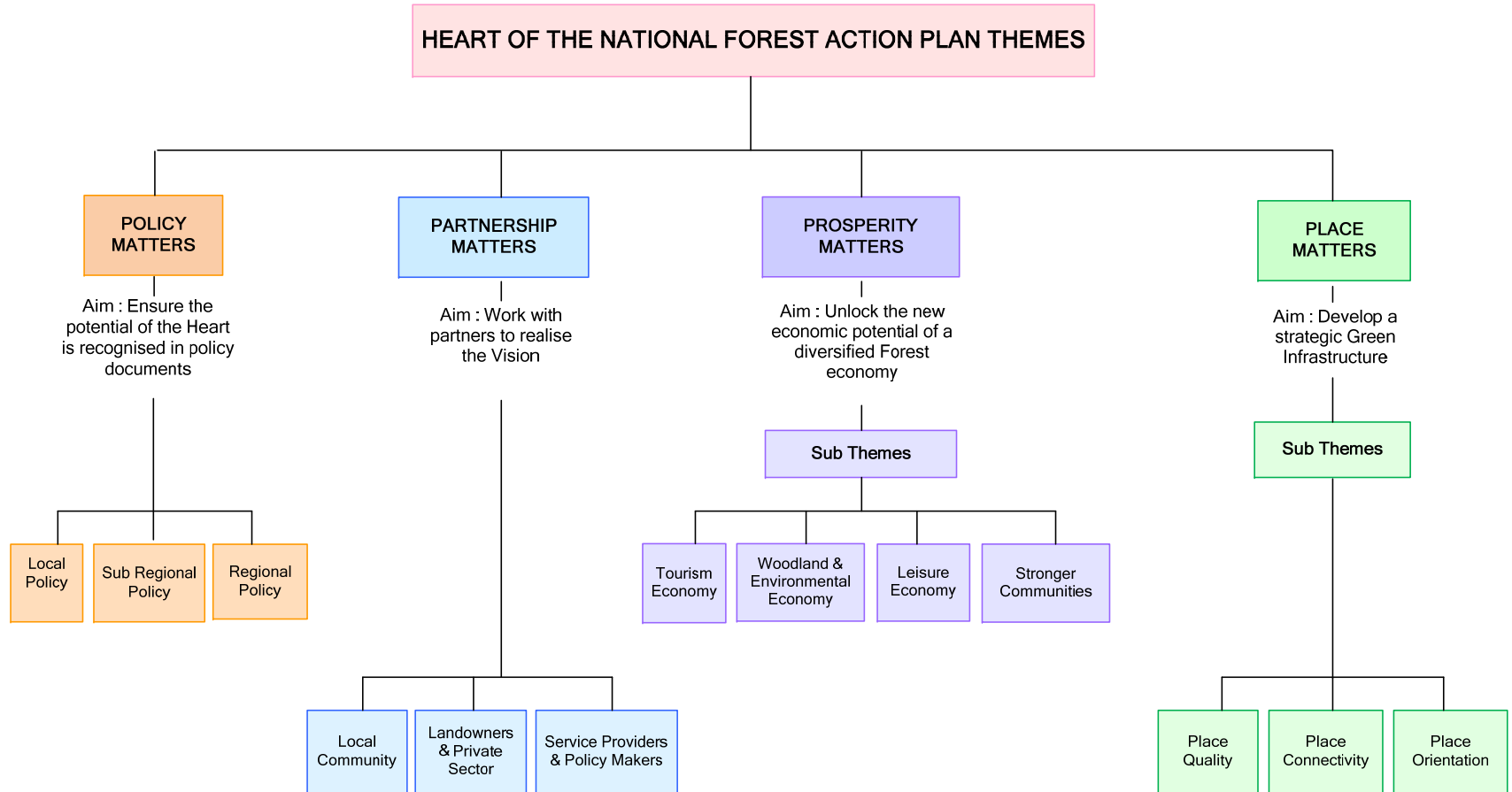
Place Matters

Aim: Develop a strategic green infrastructure.

This has three sub themes:

- *Place Quality* - A well managed attractive woodland and countryside setting.
- *Place Connectivity* - A well connected and multi-functional place
- *Place Orientation* - An easy to orientate, fun, interesting and exciting place.

Figure 2 Heart of the National Forest Action Plan Themes Diagram



- 1.3 An action plan has been prepared by theme / sub theme, and it outlined in this section. The actions were consulted on at a Stakeholder Event hosted by the client in early July 2009 and have been refined to take account of comments.
- 1.4 Some actions are short term projects (2009 -2015 years) and at varying stages of delivery e.g. Family Cycle Centre and CONKERS Aerial Walkway, self-catering accommodation and the Forest Futures Social Enterprise. Other projects need further work, or have specific challenges, and are in the medium term (2009 -2020years), e.g. Ashby Canal. Some projects are likely to come forward later in the plan period (2020 - 2026) e.g. Donington 2 lakes or Woodville Regeneration Area. Some actions are not site specific but are included in the action plan as they will need some 'action' to make it happen, for instance influencing policy or working with partners. Note the timescale and how to take forward are for guidance and could change with detailed investigation.
- 1.5 Table 1 is a summary list of the proposed actions by theme and sub themes. This is followed by a brief description of the projects by theme and challenges being addressed. This includes an indication of the next steps to guide partners.

Table 1 Summary List of Actions by Themes

Policy Matters
Policy Matters - Mainstream Vision into Policy Pol 1 Mainstream the economic potential of the Heart into key emerging policies - Short/Medium term- Lead HNFF / NFC (with EMDA, Local Planning Authorities, 6C's GI Board, SNR bodies)

Partnership Matters
Partnership Matters - Work in Partnership Part 1 Work with a range of existing and emerging partners and partnerships to secure the delivery of the HNF Vision and action plan - Short Term - Lead HNFF and NFC (working with various partners)

Prosperity Matters

Tourism - Moving from an Emerging Visitor Destination to an Established Destination

- Pros T1** Ensuring the viability of CONKERS through regular refresh - proposed Aerial Walkway - Short Term - Lead HNFF
- Pros T2** Family Cycle Centre at Hicks Lodge Country Park - Short Term - Lead NFC and FC
- Pros T3** Ashby Canal Restoration - Short/Medium/Long Term - Lead Ashby Canal Trust / Leicestershire County Council
- Pros T4** Extending self catering accommodation - lodges, tepees and houseboats - Short Term - Lead HNFF
- Pros T5** Craft/wood products centres - Medium Term - Lead HNFF
- Pros T6** Sculpture Trails / Sculpture Park - Various sites, including Feanedock Covert, Moira Pottery and trails - Short/Medium/Long Term - Lead NFC with HNFF
- Pros T7** Land Train - Medium Term - Lead HNFF
- Pros T8** Hotel in the Heart - Short/Medium Term - Lead Private sector
- Pros T9** Developing the unique tourist and leisure role of key town centres - Short Term- Lead North West Leicestershire and South Derbyshire District Councils
- Pros T10** Offering a high quality service and product - Short Term - Visit Peak District & Derbyshire and Leicestershire Promotions Limited
- Pros T11** Inward Investment Tourism and Leisure Economy Prospectus - Short Term - Lead Leicestershire Promotions Limited /NFC/HNFF
- Pros T12** Creative Sector Vision and Action Plan - Medium Term - Lead to be identified

Woodland and Environmental Economy - Developing a Woodland and Environmental Economy

Pros WE1 Timber Processing Hub - Medium Term development - Lead NFC

Pros WE2 Woodfuel Market Development - Short Term - Lead NFC

Pros WE3 Environmental Economy - Short Term- Lead NFC

Pros WE4 Crop Improvement of Woodland Offer - Short Term - Lead NFC/ FC

Pros WE5 Woodland Business Support - Short Term - Lead NFC

Pros WE6 Woodville Regeneration Area - Long Term - Lead SDDC

Pros WE7 Developing an Entrepreneurial Spirit - Short Term - Lead NFC

Leisure Economy - Developing a new exciting Leisure Economy

Pros LE1 Developing a new exciting regional outdoor leisure destination - Short/Medium/Long Term- Lead NWLDC and others

Pros LE2 Water-activity centre - Medium/Long Term for Donington 1 and 2 - Lead HNFF

Pros LE3 Equine Leisure - Medium/Long Term development, various site options - Lead Leicestershire County Council

Stronger Communities - Addressing Inequality and Building Strong, Healthy Communities

Pros SC1 Tackling Inequalities and developing a Skilled Workforce - Short Term - Lead NFC and Groundwork

Pros SC 2 Healthy Communities - Short Term - Lead NFC

Pros SC3 Building Strong Communities - Proud of the Forest - Short Term - Lead Leicestershire and Derbyshire County Council

Place Matters
<p>Place Quality - A well managed attractive Woodland and Countryside Setting</p> <p>Place PQ1 Collaborative Woodland and Countryside Management Social Enterprise - Short Term - Lead NFC and landowners</p> <p>Place PQ 2 Forest design and quality development - Short/Medium Term - Lead NWLDC and SDDC</p>
<p>Place Connectivity - A well connected and multi-functional place</p> <p>Place PC1 Rights of Way Improvements - Short to Medium Term - Lead NFF/DCC/LCC</p> <p>Place PC2 Improved and Coherent Signage of Place - Short Term - Lead HNFF/NFC</p> <p>Place PC3 Improved and targeted web information on place making - Medium Term - Lead NFC</p> <p>Place PC4 Iconic Engineering Structures -Footbridges and Aquaduct - Long Term- Lead HNFF and Highway Authority</p>
<p>Place Orientation - An easy to orientate, fun, interesting and exciting place</p> <p>Place PO1 Sense of Place, Interest and Orientation - Medium Term- Lead Local Authorities</p> <p>Place PO2 Mobile Explorer - Short/Medium Term - Lead HNFF/NFC</p> <p>Place PO3 National Forest Line and other transportation measures - Long Term - Lead NFC/LCC/DCC</p>

2 POLICY MATTERS

Sub Theme Mainstream the Vision into Policy

Aim: Ensure the potential of the Heart is recognised in key policy documents at a regional, sub regional and local policy

Challenges to be addressed:

- Locally, ensure that the emerging Core Strategies for the Local Development Frameworks (LDF) for North West Leicestershire and South Derbyshire District Council recognise the area's economic potential in terms of tourism, leisure, green infrastructure, woodland and environmental economy at the Heart.
- Sub-regionally ensure that the new emerging structures as part of the Sub National Review(SNR) recognise the economic potential of the Heart.
- Sub-regionally, seek designation of the Heart as part of the National Forest strategic green infrastructure provision.
- Continued recognition and further clarification of role of the Heart of the National Forest in the emerging Single Regional Strategy.

Pol 1 Mainstream the economic potential of the Heart into key emerging policies

Short/Medium Term- lead HNFF / NFC (with emda, Local Planning Authorities, 6C's GI Board, SNR bodies)

- 2.1 Inform the emerging Regional Strategy, SNR strategies, 6C's GI strategy, and LDF's of the regional significance of the HNF in terms of tourism, green infrastructure, woodland coverage, and economic development. Seek to ensure that the emerging core strategies for the LDF's clearly understand and articulate the spatial strategy for the HNF; which, in the broadest sense is an area of approximately 10,000 acres, with the potential to create a diverse Forest economy based around tourism, leisure, woodland and environmental economy. It will contribute some 300 jobs, provide strategic green infrastructure, and help to address inequalities and help to build stronger and healthier communities.
- 2.2 Work with the local planning authorities to secure the designation of the HNF as a 'Strategic Forest Employment Zone' within the Local Development Frameworks, thus acknowledging the importance of this area in helping to achieve the overall LDF Core Strategies. The designation of the HNF as a strategic site would greatly benefit the area in terms of providing the strategic framework to enable the joined, partnership working and recognition of the long lead in time for the delivery of this area as an established visitor destination and strategic green infrastructure and strategic employment zone. It will act as a mechanism for proactively encouraging appropriate development that is sensitive to the creation of an exemplar of the National Forest to take place. As part of this study, initial inputs have been made to the Issues and Options Consultation of the two local authorities.

- 2.3 Ensuring future planned growth in nearby urban centres proactively adds to the identity, character, green infrastructure linkages and vision of the HNF. Provide policy and guidance and support to ensure new sustainable urban extensions positively contribute to the Vision of the HNF. Developments within the HNF should seek to be exemplars incorporating a range of eco features such as wood fuel heating systems, water recycling features such as rainwater harvesting and grey water systems, solar water heating, ground source heating systems, green roofs, building alignment for natural solar capture. The design and development process should also be used to encourage a sense of place, orientation, and interest through built form and design.
- 2.4 There is scope to increase knowledge of developments suitable to a forest setting (through case studies or site visits) and by taking development proposals to the East Midlands Design Review Panel (known as OPUN) for advice and guidance that will maximise the potential for early schemes to become exemplars for future developments in the area.

Next Steps

NFC and HNFF to continue dialogues with:

- Emda to inform the preparation of the Single Regional Strategy.
- With the 6C's GI Board in the development of the 6C's Green Infrastructure Strategy,
- The SNR structures in Leicestershire and Derbyshire with the development of possible new Delivery Plans,
- To continue dialogue with LPAs, to seek designation of the Heart as a strategic Forest employment area in the emerging core strategies,,
- Ensure appropriate policy within emerging LDF's to seek exemplar Forest design and eco design within the Heart.

3 PARTNERSHIP MATTERS

Sub Theme Partnership Working

Aim: Continue to work in partnership to realise the vision.

Challenges to be addressed:

- New Partnerships and individuals working in the area.
- Losing some individuals who have 'championed' the area.
- Re-engage / refresh relations with older partnerships

Part 1 Work with a range of existing and emerging partners and partnerships to secure the delivery of the HNF Vision and action plan

Short Term - Lead HNFF and NFC (working with various partners)

- 3.1 There is a strong record of partnership working in the area, to deliver actions and achieve shared outcomes. Many individuals from a wide range of organisations have been involved in the area from the days of the closure of the mines and have actively pursued the physical transformation objectives through their various respective organisations at a regional, sub regional, local and community level. Some of these individuals are moving and some of the organisations are being replaced by new ones. Whilst the 'older partners' have an innate understanding of the area and what needs doing, it will be critical for new 'individuals and partnerships' to understand the potential of the area and see that 'there is still much to do to unlock the full potential of the area.
- 3.2 There are a number of new major landowners (e.g. Forestry Commission), who are now active in the area, it will be important to ensure they are fully involved in the delivery of the Vision.
- 3.3 There are new Partnerships being created as a result of the Sub National Review in Derbyshire and Leicestershire who will have an important role in the future funding and delivery of the Vision, it will be important to develop symbiotic relations with these to secure delivery of the action plan.
- 3.4 There are a number of older partners (e.g. Woodland Trust, East Midlands Arts, East Midlands Tourism, Culture East Midlands and Regeneration East Midlands) that should be engaged with to help bring guidance and support in the development of key projects.
- 3.5 There are older community partnerships such as the Ashby Woulds Regeneration Forum where working relations need to be refreshed to reflect the aspirations of the Vision and Action Plan for the Heart. Our consultation with a number of community groups, including the Ashby Woulds Regeneration Forum (AWRF), and an analysis of community surveys, showed that there is very strong support for the delivery of the Vision. More importantly, members of the AWRF and Parish Plans groups are keen to contribute to the development and delivery of actions, however, they do not have a mechanism to get involved.

Next Steps

- Continuation of the informal Heart of the National Forest Forum that considered the draft study on 3rd July 2009 to take forward the action plan.
- Discussions and presentations of the Vision and Action Plan to the local authority elected members, Local Strategic Partnerships, the new SNR partnerships and existing partnerships such as the Leicestershire Rural Partnership, South Derbyshire Economic Partnership to ensure they have a full appreciation of the future direction and an opportunity to identify 'common agendas' 'symbiotic relations' to help secure delivery.
- Focused project development meeting with landowners, especially to develop the Forest Futures Social Enterprise.
- Various discussions with 'new' service providers and policy makers to engage them in the delivery of the Vision and Action Plan.
- Discussion with Ashby Woulds Regeneration Forum and various community groups to consider how they can engage with the delivery of the Vision.
- Focused engagement of a range of regional organisations to seek their advice and input in securing the regional aspirations for the Heart.

4 PROSPERITY MATTERS

Sub Theme Tourism

Aim: Moving from an emerging visitor destination to an established destination

Challenges to be addressed:

- Refresh CONKERS and broaden attractions offered at CONKERS in order to expand its catchment, appeal and off peak trading.
- Support the delivery of major projects in pipeline including the Family Cycle Centre, Aerial Walkway, and Ashby Canal.
- Provide further over night accommodation in the area.
- Ensure much more is made of the range of attraction in the area, by improved connections and signposting between them.
- Stronger marketing (particularly web based) and branding of the area, currently it is very hard for the visitor to find out about the range of attractions on offer in the area and difficult to orientate once here.
- Much more interest is needed in the form of other draws (e.g. cultural events, heritage, Geocaching, rural leisure, arts), whilst the forest landscape is still establishing.
- Support the enhancement of towns and attractions in the area.

Pros T1 Ensuring the viability of CONKERS through regular refresh - proposed Aerial Walkway

Short Term - Lead HNFF

- 4.1 The priority refreshment project at CONKERS is considered to be the £4m CONKERS Aerial Walkway. This project caught the public's imagination during public consultation of the Living Landmarks Big Lottery Fund bid and is seen to have the greatest potential to make a step change in the number of visitors to CONKERS and to the National Forest. With support of the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership and the National Forest Company, initial designs have been completed and planning permission has been granted. HNFF are confident that the funding for the project from a mixture of private and public sources will be secured by December 2009 so that the project can be delivered by summer 2011.
- 4.2 The CONKERS Aerial Walkway, at 20m high by 500m long, will be the longest in the UK. It will link the two main parts of Conkers - Waterside and Discovery and has been designed to be accessible to all by providing ramps at appropriate gradients with regular resting places.
- 4.3 It will include two '*Classrooms in the Sky*' - each seating a minimum of 30 children. The classrooms will offer a completely new dimension to the CONKERS' educational experience.
- 4.4 HNFF prudently estimate that the project will attract at least an extra 25,000 visitors to CONKERS per year and that the number of visitors from outside the region will increase by 5%

- 4.5 The HNFF recognise that CONKERS needs to continually refresh, it is regularly reviewing a range of projects. Recently consideration has been given to the incorporation of a Rainforest Ventures facility but this is not currently viewed as a value for money addition. Other projects currently being assessed include the National Stone Collection and a Rabbit Warren.

Next Steps

- The next steps for this are to finalise the funding and undertake the necessary design work and permissions. There is a need for a detailed project development plan, to include a revised marketing plan for CONKERS.
- To develop a programme of continued 'refreshments' to CONKERS

Pros T2 Family Cycle Centre at Hicks Lodge Country Park

Short Term lead NFC and FC

- 4.6 A feasibility study was undertaken in 2008 for a Mountain Bike Circuit, by Wardell Armstrong with Cartwright Associates. The objectives of the Centre are:
- To provide an additional attraction at the Heart of the National Forest
 - Pitched at the right technical difficulty to attract maximum user numbers
 - Increase the overnight stays
 - Increase overall visitors to the area through engaging new audiences
 - Catalyse private sector tourism investment
 - Provide a local, as well as visitor, resource for health and well-being
- 4.7 Trail grade would be green/blue for maximum use, aimed at family-intermediate cyclists. There may also be shared use trails.
- 4.8 The study recognised the importance of event hosting capability and the need to consider subsequent expansion (i.e. additional land take). Also, 100-150 pay & display parking spaces, trail head signs, and trail marking, toilets/showers, jet wash, visitor centre/café/shop/bike hire and skills areas. The bike trails can be complemented by walking/sculpture trails.
- 4.9 The study also suggested:
- Shared use path from Hicks Lodge to CONKERS Circuit via the Newfield Incline, Moira Furnace and the Ashby Woulds Trail.
 - A set of road crossings at Measham road near the incline, Willesley Lane at the trail head and Ashby Road (Hicks Lodge into Willesley Wood); with preference for underpasses or bridges
- 4.10 Potential visitors were estimated to be 20,000 in year one rising to 40,000 in a stabilised year. The income earning opportunities would be the café, car park, bike hire and the bike shop; plus sale of maps/route cards, showers/toilets, jet wash, events. The study suggests that a build cost of at least £26/metre should be allowed for the trails. Total project cost is likely to be £2 million.

Next Steps

- The next steps for this are to finalise the funding and undertake the necessary design work and secure planning permissions. There is a need for a detailed project development plan, to include a marketing plan and planning for community and club involvement.

Pros T3 Ashby Canal Restoration

Short/Medium/Long Term - lead Ashby Canal Trust / Leicestershire County Council

- 4.11 The first phase of the project from CONKERS Waterside to Donisthorpe has been implemented, going past Moira Furnace, and attracts a canal festival and trails along the route.
- 4.12 The second phase of the project is to restore the Ashby Canal from its current terminus at Snarestone northwards for a distance of 4.5 km to a new canal wharf at Measham contributing towards the regeneration of the village and surrounding area. The canal is estimated to cost £13.1 million including canal construction, land acquisition and fees. The land has already been acquired, planning permission has been gained and Transport and Works Act order granted. Phase 2 is now waiting for funding. It is likely that £9,000 per annum will be needed to run the canal and this will allow the accumulation of a contingency fund for future maintenance. This phase will also include the development of an iconic aquaduct across Measham High Street.
- 4.13 It is estimated that once the canal is restored between Snarestone to Measham the canal will attract 150,000 visitors per annum into the area boosting spending within the local economy by some £2.7 million. Income could be gained from moorings and angling which could total £32,000 per annum, and there is a Joint Venture Agreement in place with a private sector partner to secure funding on any surplus land after the canal has been created.
- 4.14 The third phase of works would see the provision of the link from Measham to Donisthorpe including a crossing of the A42.
- 4.15 The restoration is currently being undertaken by Leicestershire County Council in liaison with the Ashby Canal Trust. Once restoration is completed it is envisaged that the canal will be passed to British Waterways to manage, as part of the national network.

Next Steps

- To continue to source funding for the restoration of the canal

Pros T4 Extending self catering accommodation - lodges, tipis and houseboats

Short Term - HNFF

- 4.16 The project is to develop new self-catering accommodation in the Heart of the National Forest. This will be targeted at leisure visitors and will reinforce the role

of the National Forest as a place to visit and support the development of the area as an established destination.

- 4.17 The project will include:
- 25 new forest lodges at Norbury's Field
 - Eight tipis on Slackey Lane
 - Nine houseboats on Conkers Waterside Basin
- 4.18 Conkers Waterside will provide an administrative and catering/bar/retail facility for self-catering visitors. One of the houseboats will provide accommodation for an on-site warden.
- 4.19 The tipis will be developed in partnership with the Caravan Club and will use their washing facilities on the new Caravan Club site.
- 4.20 An outline business plan has been prepared for this project and further details can be found there.

Next Steps

- 4.21 HNFF to critically review the outline business plan to determine which elements should be taken forward in the short term and the delivery method to be adopted in the light of its commerciality, fundability, operational feasibility and acceptability to the Planning Authorities.

Pros T5 Craft / wood products centres

Medium Term- HNFF lead

- 4.22 The ECA masterplan included a 2,000m² creative forest building intended to inspire people to take part in and share craft skills. The building was to be a wooden gridshell, with a very strong design and a direct connection to the wood ethos central to the National Forest. The project would aim to attract a broader audience than CONKERS, and would seek to increase the woodland skills base within the Heart of the Forest whilst providing facilities for visitors and conferences/functions. This project was originally identified for Hanging Hill Farm.
- 4.23 There is scope to develop the craft centre concept at various sites within the HNF. Locations near to CONKERS should be considered for this use. Examples are presented at a development at Yew Tree Farm close to the Stratford upon Avon Canal¹, or the Ferrers Centre at Staunton Harold. Viability would need to be tested, given the proximity of the Moira Craft Workshops and the Rosliston workshops nearby.
- 4.24 It is likely that this would be operated as a specialist franchise under some service agreement with the HNFF.

¹ <http://www.yewtreefarm.uki.net/shopping.htm>

Next Steps

- Undertake research amongst comparator operations to identify the key elements and how they might fit the brand values of National Forest and CONKERS
- Identify and market test amongst potential operators
- Consider the use of a pilot operation to test demand

Pros T6 Sculpture Trails / Sculpture Park

Various sites, including Feanedock Covert, Moira Pottery and trails - Short/Medium/Long Term - Lead NFC with HNFF

- 4.25 There is a set of rural sculpture trails and parks across the UK that uses art to encourage access to the countryside, interest, fun, culture and interpretation of its characteristics. These include projects such as the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail, the Common Ground Project in Dorset, the Jerwood Sculpture Trail at Ragley Park and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The use of art in this way provides a focus for visitors accessing the countryside, broadens the potential visitor market and can be used to add understanding and interest (particularly whilst the forest is still developing).
- 4.26 There is potential within the Heart of the National Forest to use art in this way. It is clear that to be an effective draw; such projects have to use some artists with established reputations, which can require significant budgets. Sculpture has also been effectively used to increase the attractiveness of multi-use trails, such as the Haldon Forest Park in Devon, Moors Valley in East Dorset and the Bath to Bristol Cycle Trail (see Technical Report for case studies).
- 4.27 The HNFF has recently submitted a bid to the Cultural Olympiad for the creation of a significant land art installation - the National Stone Centre. This could form part of the development of this overall project concept.
- 4.28 The first action in moving to this would be to galvanise the expertise and guidance from agencies such as the Forestry Commission, East Midlands Arts, Regeneration East Midlands/ OPUN, and Culture East Midlands. The involvement of local arts project champions would provide a focus for ideas and build links between the HNFF/NFC and arts professionals.

Next Steps

- Commence discussion with as East Midlands Arts and Regeneration East Midlands/ OPUN, and Culture East Midlands; building on initial discussion as part of the stakeholder workshops undertaken through this study
- Identify a set of visitor and arts objectives for the project
- Identify a set of routes/areas that may be used for a trail or sculpture park, both on the CONKERS site and elsewhere in the wider Heart of the National Forest

Pros T7 Land Train

Medium Term - HNFF lead

- 4.29 The Heart of the National Forest Foundation considered the establishment of a Land Train² at CONKERS in 2007, with an operational load of 53 people. The Land Train was seen as a potential attraction in its own right as well as an alternative link between CONKERS Discovery and CONKERS Waterside. It was considered that the Train might carry 424-530 people per day in summer and 265 people per day in winter, with most users being existing CONKERS visitors. Under various scenarios, the cost of running the Land Train outweighed direct and indirect benefits and the Foundation did not proceed. However as the sites within the Heart of the Forest develop the project will merit further consideration.

Next Steps

- Consider the Land Train as part of a process circulating visitors around the Heart of the National Forest

Pros T8 Hotel in the Heart

Short / Medium Term - Private sector lead

- 4.30 The ECA masterplan included the scope for a hotel situated somewhere within the central hub of the Heart, close to CONKERS and the restored water recreation facilities. This is still an aspiration for the area for the longer term, as it is dependent upon the completion and remediation of the Donington 2 site and the New Albion site, as well as the maturing of the National Forest as a destination.
- 4.31 There are opportunities for hotel development elsewhere in the wider Heart of the National Forest as part of private sector development. The inclusion of the National Forest values within Local Development Frameworks will allow private sector hotel development design and operation to reinforce the brand values of the National Forest.

Next Steps

- Monitor hotel demand within the National Forest to identify the commercial opportunity for a hotel
- Work with Local Planning Authorities to ensure that the aspirations for the Heart are included within the Local Development Framework core strategy.

² There is a green travel plan with various sustainable transport measures - see Place PO3 project under Place Matters, this project is specifically about the Land Train commercial opportunity.

Pros T9 Developing the unique tourist and leisure role of key town centres

Short Term- Lead North West Leicestershire and South Derbyshire District Councils

- 4.32 Ashby, Swadlincote, Measham, Coalville, Burton on Trent, and a number of the rural centres within the HNF, have the potential to develop niche markets and perform the role of service centres for the growing visitor market to the HNF. For instance, in the case of Swadlincote, there are current proposals for redevelopment of the Hepworth's site near Morrison's. This will be a multi-million pound investment to create new retail/leisure facilities including a five-screen cinema, bingo/bowling alley, 3 restaurants and 12 other retail units, together with 269 parking spaces. This combined with the existing ski slope, will all contribute to interest in developing the overnight visitor market in the area. The implementation of regeneration plans for Coalville and Burton on Trent will result in an improved retail and indoor leisure experience, leisure and cultural facilities, combined with the exiting attraction of Snibstone museum close by in Coalville.
- 4.33 Ashby already has a number of attractions (such as the castle) as well as a quality built environment. Measham has the Ashby Canal, and a number of interesting developments based on its historic heritage. Other rural centres could develop activities such as information signposting, guided walks, equipment hire, accommodation, festivals related to the forest.
- 4.34 These centres are all important to the overall offer of the Heart, adding to the critical mass, and provide a focus for visitor activity and the growing attractiveness of the area as a visitor destination.
- 4.35 A first step for this would be to seek guidance and development ideas from leads in these centres such as the South Derbyshire District Council (Economic Development) the Leicestershire Rural Partnership (Market Towns Team) and the various Parish Plans Groups to kick start the project ideas.

Next Steps

- Continue to work with North West Leicestershire and South Derbyshire District Councils to ensure that policy and regeneration plans for these key centres reinforce the National Forest
- Work with existing Partnerships such as the Leicestershire Rural Partnership, and the South Derbyshire Economic Partnership, to support the regeneration role of these centres to improve the 'visitor appeal'.
- Chambers of Commerce and other local trade associations, town / parish councils to develop plans for increasing the tourism and leisure role of these centres.

Pros T10 Offering a high quality service and product

Short Term - Visit Peak District & Derbyshire and Leicestershire Promotions Limited

- 4.36 A key element of moving to become an established visitor destination relies on the wider range of hospitality, recreation and retail services offered by the private sector. It is vital that a very high quality of service and sites are offered at competitive prices in order to attract repeat business and word of mouth referrals. There is a need to provide training and business support to the existing restaurants, bed and breakfast facilities, and other support services to develop the quality of service offered and quality of product. Many of these providers are dispersed within the HNF and the key centres of Ashby, Measham and Swadlincote. Destination Management in Derbyshire has offered a range of training projects targeted at the hospitality sector, similar courses should be developed for the HNF businesses possibly extending the 'Proud of the Forest' type campaign to verbally spread the message of what an exciting and interesting place the Heart is.
- 4.37 The establishment of training priorities should be informed by mystery shopper research and consultation with tourism quality assurance assessors.

Next Steps

- Work with Visit Peak District & Derbyshire and Leicestershire Promotions Limited to bid for mystery shopper funding
- Work with LRP and South Derbyshire District Council for business support and training to towns near the Heart
- Establish training priorities to meet strategic tourism and leisure objectives
- Consultation with hospitality, recreation and retail businesses to confirm demand
- Develop delivery programme with Visit Peak District & Derbyshire, Leicestershire Promotions Limited and East Midlands Tourism.

Pros T11 Inward Investment Tourism and Leisure Economy Prospectus

Short Term - Lead Leicestershire Promotions Limited

- 4.38 This project is a direct result of consultation on the draft study report, where a clear need to capture private sector investment was identified. The project is to develop and then use an inward investment prospectus designed to specifically attract tourism and leisure sector investors into the Heart of the National Forest.
- 4.39 The Prospectus would be a short, very specific marketing document that would then be used by agencies involved in inward investment such as Prospect Leicestershire, South Derbyshire Economic Development and Leicestershire Promotions and Visit Peak District & Derbyshire Destination Management agencies.

Next Steps

- 4.2 Leicestershire Promotions with support from the NFC and the HNFF, to commission the preparation of a prospectus aimed specifically at attracting private sector investment into the development of the leisure and tourism economy of the National Forest with particular emphasis on the Heart of the National Forest.

Pros T12 Creative Sector Vision and Action Plan

Medium Term - Lead to be identified

- 4.3 There are various proposals to consider making the area 'fun and interesting' by using arts and sculptural features and to make the wider area more attractive by ensuring a wider range of events and festivals.
- 4.4 This project is a direct result of consultation on the draft study report, where a need was highlighted to adopt a more strategic consideration of the full potential of arts and cultural in terms of the Forest economy, environment and developing stronger and healthy communities. During the consultations, it was highlighted that various regional bodies should be engaged to assist in developing this project. There was a suggestion that such a project could be at the NF level and have a greater focus on the HNF.

Next Steps

- 4.5 To identify a lead champion who would contact appropriate regional and other partners to assist in developing this project, drafting a brief and identify sources of funding (if necessary) to help unlock the full potential of the HNF / NF in terms of the creative sector.

5 PROSPERITY MATTERS

Sub Theme Developing a Woodland and Environmental Economy

Aim: Developing the woodland and environmental economy

Challenges to be addressed:

- Develop financially viable woodlands based on new woodland business development.
- Support start up of new woodland business by providing grants, advice, brokerage and networking support.
- Develop growth in environmental sector based on renewable fuel potential of the Forest and housing growth in the region.

Pros WE1 Timber Processing Hub

Medium term development - lead NFC

- 5.1 The purpose of this project is to encourage the production of value added timber products within the HNF area, to capture this added value within the local economy as opposed to selling timber to an external market as a low value raw material. The hub would be a single area where processing businesses could benefit from the geographical integration, reducing the handling of materials. Through this integration, deliveries can be made to a single point with the product being graded into a variety of uses from sawmilling to sculpture, charcoal production, chipping and log production. Opportunities also exist for the timber waste from facilities to be used to heat and potentially power the facility.
- 5.2 The opportunity also exists for tertiary processing facilities such as furniture or joinery workshops to establish on the site, using the local products and further adding value. This would provide the site with a retail function by providing a link to the final consumer.
- 5.3 The timber processing hub could be a development of the Forest Futures Social Enterprise, benefiting from the site base, skills and linkages already developed. Alternatively, the timber processing hub could be set up as an independent company benefitting from collaborative working.

Next Steps

- Develop through the National Forest wider initiative.

Pros WE2 Woodfuel Market Development

Short Term - lead NFC

- 5.4 Woodfuel is a growing national industry which is perceived as offering a strong opportunity for the sale of small timber roundwood. The purpose of this project is to expand the current supply and demand for woodfuel in the HNF (and surrounding areas) which is currently restricted to the biomass heating system at

the National Forest Youth Hostel, and exploration of woodfuel heating system at CONKERS. With regard to supply, the project aims to channel funding to landowners to invest in capital improvements to facilitate this operation, including the creation of extraction routes and storage facilities and the purchase of equipment such as processors and delivery vehicles. Private businesses would be eligible for RDPE funding through emda at present.

- 5.5 With regard to promoting demand, the project aims to assist potential users to access funding to off-set the cost difference of biomass installations compared to conventional oil and gas installations and to access technological advice in terms of specification, planning and design considerations, etc. The project also aims to establish effective supply chains, co-ordinating supply and demand and liaising with existing operators such as Rural Energy. There is considerable scope for developing wider 'environmental' consultancy and development businesses on the back of the emerging residential growth and Code for Sustainability standards that are being encouraged for new developments.

Next Steps

- Develop through the National Forest wider initiative

Pros WE3 Environmental Economy

Short Term- lead NFC

- 5.6 The national market for firewood is currently buoyant, with increasing numbers of householders installing log burning stoves as attractive features and to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels. This trend is expected to continue into the future and as gas prices continue to rise. This increased demand has resulted in a significant proportional increase in the value of timber for firewood, providing a ready source of revenue for landowners. This project aims to capture this potential within the HNF area, which benefits from a long term association with solid fuel. This will be undertaken through joint marketing with local stove manufacturers to the domestic market, and also targeted marketing to residential developers to encourage the inclusion of stoves as attractive features in high quality new homes. It is anticipated that this project will result in increased economic activity within the HNF area through the harvesting and conversion of firewood and the sale, installation and maintenance of stoves.

- 5.7 This initiative could be a ready development of the Forest Futures Social Enterprise given the right personnel to drive the concept forward.

Next Steps

- Develop through the National Forest wider initiative

Pros WE4 Crop Improvement of woodland offer

Short Term - lead NFC / FC

- 5.8 This project focuses on the improvement of the standing timber resource in the HNF, to improve the financial return from thinning and harvesting operations. Crop improvement operations, such as formative and high pruning, and

uneconomic first thinning, result in costs to landowners which are difficult to justify with no current revenue income from the sites. An additional benefit of this project is that it would create additional work for local woodland businesses, assisting the local rural economy.

Next Steps

- Develop through the National Forest wider initiative

Pros WE5 Woodland Business Support

Short Term - lead NFC

- 5.9 The purpose of this project is to help local forest-based businesses to grow by providing appropriate support. This would encompass a range of businesses offering woodland management, using forest products or connected with the use of sites. The result of this growth would be additional employment and wealth generation within the area.
- 5.10 For existing businesses, support would be offered through funding for training staff and improving business skills, capital grants for machinery purchase for business diversification, support for apprenticeships, and advice and assistance with activities such as marketing and business administration.
- 5.11 Where market gaps exist, support would be given to local people to encourage new business creation. This support could take the form of business planning advice, business skills training, recruitment assistance, subsidised business incubation units and grants for equipment purchase and staff training and qualification.

Next Steps

- Develop through the National Forest wider initiative

Pros WE6 Woodville Regeneration Area

Long Term Lead SDDC

- 5.12 Look to develop part of the Woodville Regeneration Site as part of the Forest based strategic employment area, including mixed use employment development that would contribute to the HNF vision. This could be a possible basis for timber processing and woodfuel development projects, capitalising on the close proximity to the urban centre of Swadlincote.
- 5.13 The Woodville Regeneration project is a highly complicated project, which will need concerted effort to package the range of funding initiatives and land owners to bring forward the development of this area. Given its close proximity and linkages between the central hub of the Heart and the urban centre of Swadlincote, the physical transformation of this from the point of the Heart is very important.
- 5.14 The site is likely to be progressed via the Local Development Framework for South Derbyshire, however, given its complexities; it will require a proactive partnership effort that positively contributes to the HNF and the SDDC aspirations

for the area. Thus, preparatory work on moving forward this project needs to happen now.

Next Steps

- Work in partnership with South Derbyshire District Council to develop an action plan and ensure this area is clearly identified in the emerging LDF policy as regeneration and Forest related employment area.

Pros WE7 Developing an Entrepreneurial Spirit

Short Term- lead NFC

- 5.15 The purpose of this project is to create a culture within the HNF where local entrepreneurs can feel confident in bringing forward their ideas and converting them into viable businesses. This will seek to capture new and innovative ideas for the production and use of woodland products and to increase business activity in the area as a result. Examples mentioned in the workshops include woodland management holidays associated with the YHA, locally grown produce marketed and added value at local attractions such as CONKERS, bee keeping and honey making. This will be achieved through the provision of business planning and establishment advice to potential local entrepreneurs, business start-up grants and facilities such as subsidised business incubation units. In some cases, there may be simple support of linkages to potential markets or linkages to the key service centres and attractions in the area. This project will rely on strong links with the community.
- 5.16 Support would also be provided to launch new businesses based on ideas emerging from gaps identified in the market

Next Steps

- Develop project specification and development plan through the overall woodland economy project

6 PROSPERITY MATTERS

Sub Theme Leisure Economy

Aim: Develop a range of exciting commercial leisure activities at the Heart

Challenge to be addressed:

- To unlock the opportunity presented by new developing woodland and country park (that are not constrained by quality of biodiversity) to generate revenue and create an exciting new regional leisure destination at the Heart of the National Forest.

Pros LE1 Developing a new exciting regional outdoor leisure destination

Short/Medium/Long Term- Lead NWLDC and others

- 6.1 The relative lack of environmental constraints in the developing Forest can allow a more diverse use of activities than in established woodland. This could include various high adrenaline sports to complement some of the existing operations (such as the existing tank driving and off-road driving facilities). It will be important to ensure that new activities reinforce the brand values of the National Forest. Planning for the remediation of the New Albion site needs to ensure that they take account of new leisure uses, particularly as the remediation may take place in stages as the site is filled.
- 6.2 A number of activities related to water, cycling, horse riding and walking have already been created or are proposed. However, there is a need to carefully consider the economic potential of underutilised sites to develop for commercial leisure uses e.g. sites such as Tow Path, Feanedock Covert, New Albion Site (when restored), Moira Pottery / Rawdon East, Prestop Park and Pot Kiln Woodland, for either short term, complimentary or longer term outdoor leisure pursuits.
- 6.3 Golf has been identified as a possible use for the New Albion landfill site, however, a much more considered view is required of the overall leisure potential of the area, and the 'fit' of golf within this. To be successful, a golf architect will need to be involved in the design and this will need to be co-ordinated with any proposals to locate any land art features on this site.
- 6.4 A first action is the need to identify a lead partner to explore the potential opportunities, and viability of options, identify potential providers and develop project concepts. A number of the major landowners should be involved in the project development, particularly the Forestry Commission, and private sector owners. This project fits within the priorities of both the Leicestershire Rural Partnership³ and South Derbyshire District Council.

³ Recent economic baseline study identified leisure and equine sector as an important growth sector for the Leicestershire rural economy.

Next Steps

- Establish a working group to take forward project.
- Identify site options and further define opportunities in discussion with relevant landowners. (This could be along the lines of the traditional rural sports or it could be looking at developing a Forest based adrenalin leisure centre).
- Identify and test opportunities with potential private sector operators
- Ensure New Albion Site remediation take account of the emerging leisure use.
- Soft market test for a quiet water sports operator for Donington 1 (canoeing etc.), taking into account community preferences for use of the lake
- Soft market test and review demand for noisy multi-activity sports in advance of Donington 2 becoming available, in order to inform remediation arrangements and develop detailed plans for the longer term.
- Consider examples of places that have developed sport and leisure based specialist markets e.g. adrenalin sports at Fort William.
- Take up community discussions (including sports development partnerships) about opportunities for community use of Donington 1 Lake for the short term. We are aware of some current funding opportunities - such as the Sport England funds for rural communities
- Make woodland sites available for other commercial operators to provide sports enterprises. Choose sites that do not preclude the main outdoor recreation and trail routes through the Heart of the National Forest.

Pros LE2 Water-activity centre

Medium/Long Term for Donington 1 and 2 - Lead HNFF

- 6.5 The proposals for water-based recreation were set out in the ECA Masterplan and had a first phase for short term implementation and a second phase linked to the release of Donington 2. Phase 1 used the existing lake at Albert Village as the site of a watersports centre for non-motorised activities. A watersports centre would be located on the southern side of the lake with a floating pontoon.
- 6.6 The watersports centre would have a building of 500 m² to provide spaces that could be used for training, education and/or a cafe. These spaces would be supported by ancillary areas such as reception, offices, kitchen and changing rooms and workshop. A secure structure of about 300 m² could then provide boat storage.
- 6.7 Issues to be addressed include vehicular access and services and the likelihood that the scale of the lake may restrict use to beginners or those undertaking a mix of watersports as part of a taster or multi-activity trip.
- 6.8 There is a short term opportunity to use Donington 1 Lake for short term local club use, as a pilot for a future commercial scheme. This will require some capacity building work to set up and operate clubs along with the further development of links between the HNFF and the community.
- 6.9 It is anticipated that a watersports centre project development and operation will be through the private sector under some service agreement with the HNFF.

Confirmation of this approach will need to be undertaken through some soft market testing amongst potential leisure operators.

- 6.10 The use of Donington 2 for watersports remains a long term possibility but is linked to completion of the landfill operations on the Albion.

Next Steps

- Undertake community consultation about uses for Donington 1 in partnership with the Ashby Woulds Forum
- Identify local and national leisure operators and test for interest in developing and operating a watersports centre
- Develop long term plans for remediation of Donington 2, informed by community and leisure operators discussion

Pros LE3 Equine Leisure

Medium/Long Term development, various site options - lead Leicestershire County Council

- 6.11 Although there is a good set of bridleways and permissive routes, there are few opportunities for the general public to ride horses in the National Forest. There is a potential project to facilitate riding stables offering a variety of trekking and livery within the Heart of the National Forest. This could be at or near CONKERS, and would need to include stabling, stores and access to fields for grazing. It would also need some car parking and should be located within easy access of a network of bridleways.
- 6.12 Development of equine tourism will require further equine visitor information development, such as mapping to link together the bridle way opportunities identified in the National Forest horse riding guide. This might need to be supported by further work around access points (some locations currently have car parks with height restrictions) and work amongst landowners to facilitate easy access with suitable permits.
- 6.13 One of the key issues is to identify site(s) for an equine centre with the required space for grazing and built facilities and connections to the bridleway network. There is also a need to develop detailed proposals drawing in specialist equine expertise.

Next Steps

- Undertake discussions with organisations such as the Leicestershire Equine Partnership (LEEM) and Ride Welland to assess demand and operational constraints
- Assess bridleway routes to form suitable trails avoiding conflict with other trail users and busy road crossings
- Identify site options

7 PROSPERITY MATTERS

Sub Theme Stronger Communities

Aim: Addressing inequalities through skills, training, health and well being and creating strong proactively engaged communities.

Challenges to be addressed:

- There are several communities within and around the Heart facing multiple inequalities especially in skills, educational aspirations, health, and obesity.
- New growing population of young people to be engaged and instil a pride in the Forest as a great place to work and play in.
- Communities want to support the delivery of the Heart Vision but do not how to get involved.

Pros SC1 Developing a skilled Workforce

Short Term - lead NFC and Groundwork

- 7.1 This project aims to assist local people in gaining the skills required to work within the woodland sector in the HNF and wider NF. There will be a particular focus on developing transferable skills such as machinery use or health and safety, to enable people to move between sectors. This project would be delivered through the provision of subsidised training courses to local people in a range of relevant skills. Training could be provided by landowners working collaboratively in partnership with organisations such as the BTCV, and Moira Replan.
- 7.2 Taster sessions would be provided as a first step to accredited training courses linked to the emerging woodland economy. This would be targeted specifically at those who are unemployed, young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), and priority communities.
- 7.3 A range of partners will be involved at different stages of the project development, but it will be important to start off with simple focused objectives and grow as the team become embedded into the community and the various partnerships.
- 7.4 The Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) will be critical in the early development and funding of the projects (through individual partners such as Job Centre +, Local Education Authorities who will take on responsibility for education budgets from the LSC in 2010 and Connexions). Delivery is likely to be via the Social enterprise.

Next Steps

- Work with individuals who showed enthusiasm, potential trainees, and funding ideas at the workshop to explore skills and training as part of this study.
- Develop training ideas further with BTCV and Moira Replan who are already providing some support of this nature.
- Engage and inform the LSP's about the project and ensure wider opportunities are explored with Partners.

- Talk to South Derbyshire District Council who are also considering establishing a training centre within a current vacant listed building within the Heart to see if there are any synergies.
- Identify and bid for funding from the emerging Sub National Review Bodies e.g. Prospect Leicestershire and Derbyshire County Council.

Pros SC 2 Healthy Communities

Short Term - Lead NFC

- There are a number of communities in the area that have health and obesity problems. The various investments created in the multi-user trails provide an excellent opportunity to support programmes aimed at improving the health and well being of communities. However, to explore the Forest and get fit, will require a degree of engagement and confidence building. The potential benefits from this sort of initiative are immense, not only for health, but also in raising aspirations.
- A number of different projects provide examples and best practice on how to do more of this work - e.g. 'Get Active in the Forest' at Rosliston to increase sports participation aimed at improving health. Or Green Gyms developed nationally by BTCV.
- A different approach to addressing health issues is use of arts and sculpture in the Forest at Cannock led by the Forestry Commission, here art is used for supporting mental health patients. A similar project could be developed to engage young people and possibly those with mental health via schools, the output could be implemented in the Forest to add fun and interest and develop the 'Proud of the Forest' campaign.

Next Steps

- Working closely with the PCTs and LSPs to audit what is currently being delivered and how the Heart can contribute to helping create 'healthy and proud communities in the Forest'.
- Work with groups already engaged with priority communities to identify needs and develop 'grass routes' projects that build confidence to use the Heart as a base for health, building confidence, developing skills, volunteering.
- Work with PCT and arts groups, possibly through schools and linked to mental health to develop art installations as part of the 'Proud of the Forest' campaign.

Pros SC3 Building Strong Communities - 'Proud of the Forest'

Short Term - Leicestershire and Derbyshire County Council

- 7.5 During our consultations and desktop research, we found that a lot of people wanted to be proactively involved in the development of the Heart but did not know how to get involved. This point came out very strongly at the Ashby Wolds Regeneration Forum and at the Parish Plan Group meetings.
- 7.6 Similarly, there is a need for greater volunteer support in a range of projects, from land management, wardens, guided walks, signposting visitors, growing locally

grown produce, capturing heritage and history of the area, verbally conveying the excitement and interest of the area through formal and informal talks etc.

- 7.7 There is also a particular need to engage with the growing number of young people in the area to enjoy, respect and consider the Forest as an obvious place for employment or business generation and also to seek their innovative ideas on developing the current Forest attractions and places of interest.
- 7.8 There is community engagement officer, who works through out the NF. There are various officers, e.g. South Derbyshire's environmental officer who works with young people on specific projects, there is Leicestershire County Councils volunteering project too, and the HNFF have various volunteers who support them of specific sites.
- 7.9 However, our research indicated that there is a need to invest some time in looking at how best to maximise volunteering for the Heart. There are some very good examples from projects run by Leicestershire County Council in Ibstock to learn from.

Next Steps

- The County Councils to work with existing community groups such as Ashby Wolds Regeneration Forum and various local groups to work with the HNFF and the NFC to investigate how to develop stronger communities who are 'Proud of the Forest', and mechanisms for them to get proactively involved.
- Develop a mechanism for encouraging volunteering within the Heart.

8 PLACE MATTERS

Sub Theme Place Quality

Aim: A well managed, attractive woodland and countryside setting

Challenges to be addressed:

- Growing woodland planting and countryside landscape in need of quality management to secure high quality Forest landscape.
- High cost of maintenance, and need for creative measures to generate revenue and reduce costs to pay for quality environment

Place PQ1 Collaborative woodland and countryside management social enterprise - Forest Futures

Short Term - lead NFC and landowners

8.1 An outline business plan has been prepared for the Woodland and Countryside land management, skills development and volunteering project. This project is aimed at putting into place a mechanism of joint working, via a Forest Futures Social Enterprise aimed at ensuring the quality of woodland and countryside management is of a high quality and that this is developed collaboratively to gain benefits of economies of scale. Recent research⁴ on the wood resource that can be anticipated in the National Forest confirms the feasibility of this project. In brief, the project will:

- Secure effective, co-ordinated and sustainable ongoing woodland and countryside management (including woodland access) into the future to develop attractive, mature woodland that is necessary for the established visitor destination
- Provide opportunities for skills and training activities (in particular transferable skills) through a number of means, including apprenticeships with existing businesses, mentoring, qualifications and volunteering with BTCV/ Moira Replan and volunteering with local groups such as “Friends of” groups.
- Develop the woodland economy of the area through collaborative production, harvesting and marketing
- Foster and support an entrepreneurial culture to secure future financial return from timber products and environmental products (capturing added value from processing and conversion).
- Ensure proper communication, understanding and involvement with local communities.

Next Steps

- Develop and agree objectives and structure of the Social Enterprise
- Agree governance and develop memorandum and articles of association

⁴ Quantification of the Forest Resource Update Report (June 2009) by Eamonn Wall & Co.

- Secure funding support.
- Develop job specifications and recruit staff as required
- Develop short, medium and long term work plan

Place PQ 2 Forest design and quality development

Short/Medium Term - lead NWLDC and SDDC

- 8.2 Ensuring future planned growth in nearby urban centres proactively adds to the identity, character, green infrastructure linkages and vision of the HNF. This project aims to provide guidance and support to ensure new sustainable urban extensions positively contribute to the vision of the HNF. Developments within the HNF should seek to be exemplars incorporating a high quality design and a range of eco features such as wood fuel heating systems, water recycling features such as rainwater harvesting and grey water systems, solar water heating, ground source heating systems, green roofs, building alignment for natural solar capture.
- 8.3 There is scope to increase knowledge of developments suitable to a forest setting through case studies or site visits, and by taking development proposals to the East Midlands Design Review Panel (known as OPUN) for advice and guidance that will maximise the potential for early schemes to become exemplars for future developments in the area.

Next Steps:

- Work with Local Planning authority to secure exemplar development within the Heart.
- Work with OPUN to seek guidance from the Design Review Panel relating to major new developments that will maximise the potential for early schemes to become exemplars for future developments in the area.

9 PLACE MATTERS

Sub Theme Place Connectivity

Aim: Develop a well connected and multi-functional place

Challenges to be addressed:

- Growth in future planned development in the surrounding urban areas and need to provide a strategic green infrastructure for the region
- Need for improved physical access linkages between places and routes to service centres
- Need to increase the number of users of existing walking and multi-user routes

Place PC1 Rights of Way Improvements

Short To Medium Term - lead NFC/ DCC/LCC

- 9.1 The project will build on the current network of public rights of way to provide a well connected and well managed network of public rights of way and Greenways both within the Heart and out into the wider surrounding areas to connect with various multifunctional nodes.
- 9.2 It will be an essential element of Green Infrastructure providing a wide range of benefits that cut across many disciplines and functions including new leisure and tourism facilities, community accessibility, encourage healthier lifestyles, protect the natural environment, and reduce traffic congestions, promote social inclusion.
- 9.3 Both Derbyshire County Council and Leicestershire County Council have various relevant action plans that can help with the delivery of the HNF Vision and Action plan. For instance the Greenway Strategy for South Derbyshire has proposed routes identified for this area - notably a new link from CONKERS Circuit out to Rosliston and Swadlincote.

Next Steps

- NFC to work with LCC and DCC in bringing forward a series of Rights of Way Improvements into the Heart of the National Forest.

Place PC2 Improved and Coherent Signage of Place

Short Term - lead HNFF/NFC

- 9.4 To address the need to create a sense of cohesion within the Heart between various attractions and service centres, through the use of consistent signage, publications, web presence and the use of built and landscape design to create land mark features. This will not only improve the flow of visitors between places, contribute to extending the visitor stay but will help to make more of the sum of the individual sites, and contribute towards the objective of moving towards an established destination. There is a need for a co-ordinated set of readily identifiable signage across the National Forest.

- 9.5 This project will need to be developed in consultation with the Local Planning and Highway Authorities (including rights of way) as well as landowners where new permissive paths may be needed.
- 9.6 The routes should consider the opportunities for existing or new enterprises which may serve users of the routes.

Next Steps

- Confirm routes and functional zones/points of interest
- Establish linear and circular routes to serve different local and visitor markets
- Develop plans for awareness building and marketing activity
- Identify and bid for funding

Place PC3 Improved and targeted web information on place making.

Medium Term - lead NFC

- 9.7 Currently a visitor to the area has to work hard to find out about the range of opportunities available and so may only visit one attraction and not be encouraged to stay longer and spend more in the area. There is considerable support from the local community stakeholders to ensure much more is made of the Heart in terms of things to do, places to go to, interpretation of heritage etc. and their enthusiasm should be galvanised in developing this project.
- 9.8 Produce or enhance an existing web site aimed at the visitor market to provide a 'one stop shop' for people wanting to visit the area. It would give a strong identity to the area and a strong brand, improving the cohesiveness of the NF and HNF by giving a common face to the attractions and facilities featured on it. The web site could be spatially based, and would include good information on walking, cycling and horse riding routes and the attractions and facilities (cafe's, pubs etc). These maps may be available to download from the site. The development of content as part of this project should be co-ordinated with the Mobile Explorer Project, which will also utilise some of this information.

Next Steps

- Define project - Develop content
- Identify and bid for funding

Place PC4 Iconic Engineering Structures -Footbridges and Aquaduct

Long Term- lead HNFF and Highway Authorities

- 9.9 The ECA Masterplan identified the provision of two iconic timber footbridges over roads to link key destinations. The first footbridge over Rawdon Road would link the proposed Creative Forest Experience at Hanging Hill and the proposed CONKERS tower. The second footbridge over Spring Cottage Road would link the CONKERS Tower to Donington 1 Lake.
- 9.10 The two new footbridges over existing roads would not only provide vital connections, but also create symbolic gateways to the Heart for those travelling along the roads within it. The proposal is that these should be iconic bridges.

Both these bridges would be designed for disabled access and be wide enough to allow cyclists and walkers to cross safely.

- 9.11 Phase 2 of the Ashby Canal includes a modern iconic aquaduct across Measham High Street, which as an engineering feature will serve as an attraction in its own right and further help the regeneration of Measham.

Next Steps

- Assess capital and maintenance cost implications, impacts and funding
- Look to progress as part of a wider 'place shaping and creating interesting spaces in this regionally important location.

10 PLACE MATTERS

Sub Theme Place Orientation

Aim: An easy to orientate, fun, interesting and exciting place

Challenges to be addressed:

- Address difficulty in orientation with the Heart, with key focal points and landmarks to improve the sense of direction and sense of place within the Heart
- Need to have interest whilst the Forest landscape is maturing.

Place PO1 Sense of place, Interest and Orientation

Medium Term- lead Local Authorities

- 10.1 Zone the HNF into activity areas to give a strong direction, identity and public understanding of what there is to do in different areas and an overall picture of what the HNF can offer. For instance the central visitor hub, the water sports zone, the adrenalin activity zone, the quiet zones, service centres and linkages between these.
- 10.2 Within this project there are opportunities to use new landmarks and art features such as the Aerial Walkway to improve sense of place and orientation⁵. Such features can also be used to create an interesting place during the period whilst the Forest is still getting established.

Next Steps

- Develop a plan of current and future activities in line with zone themes.
- Link signing protocols within these thematic zones within the separate
- Identify funding opportunities and bid for funds

Place PO2 Mobile Explorer

Short/Medium Term - lead HNFF/NFC

- 10.3 An outline business plan has been prepared for the Mobile Explorer. A mobile explorer project can be developed to provide interpretation and orientation of the Heart of the National Forest, as well as attracting new visitors. The project can be developed in stages, with early phases targeted towards school and other groups..
- 10.4 The project has two elements:
- Development of GPS sensitive content with images, text, sound and moving image files relating to orientation, developing landscape, history, views, flora and fauna, arts, etc. Some of this content will be shared with the *Improved and targeted web information on place making* project discussed above
 - Hire/loan of explorer hardware for use by visitors
- 10.5 This project is the subject of a separate outline business plan.

⁵ Like the use of the Kelpies in the Helix Big Lottery project - RTP Study 2008.

Next Steps

- HNFF to determine the process and timetable for a more detailed assessment of the proposal taking into account experience elsewhere; the views of those directly involved in delivering educational activities; commercial opportunities and its potential to provide a competitive advantage to the Heart of the Forest.

Place PO3 National Forest Line and other transportation measures

Long Term - lead NFC/LCC / DCC

- 10.6 The project is to regularly assess the viability of converting the minerals line into a National Forest Line passenger service (from Leicester to Burton on Trent in Staffordshire) making the Heart of the Forest accessible to people from inner cities, visitors, businesses and residents in a sustainable way, and reducing car use.
- 10.7 This viability assessment is linked to the quantum of housing and employment growth proposed for South Derbyshire, East Staffordshire and North West Leicestershire, which will have an impact on the cost benefit analysis.
- 10.8 In the interim, explore alternative sustainable forms of transportation, expanding green travel plans, park and ride options and car parking provision within the Heart.

Next Steps

- Set timetable for regular discussion with stakeholders about developing sustainable transport measures within the Heart to consider the National Forest Line.
- Set up a group to consider green travel measures within the Heart.