

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL
PARK BOARD MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON 13TH
OCTOBER 2021 AT 10:00**

PRESENT

John Everitt, National Forest Company (Vice-chair)	JE
Julie Attard, Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme	JA
Sam Lattaway, National Forest Company	SL
Matthew Bradford, Charnwood Borough Council	MB
Martin Peters, Leicestershire Promotions	MP
Richard Bennett, Charnwood Borough Council	RBe
Cllr. Roy Denney, Leicester & Leicestershire Access Forum	RD
Vicky Cormie, Leicestershire County Council	VC
James O'Brien, Leicestershire County Council	JOB
John Howells, Leicestershire Local Access Forum	JH
Cllr Martin Cartwright, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	MC
James Dymond, Bradgate Park Trust	JD
Richard Drakeley, National Forest Company	RDr
Helen Smith, Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme	HS
Damien Buckley, Leicestershire County Council (Minutes)	DB

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr Richard Bailey, Charnwood Borough Council (Chair)	RB
Ian Nelson, North West Leicestershire District Council	IN
Phil Jackson, Aggregate Industries UK Ltd	PJ
James Marshall, Natural England	JMa
Kirstie Rae, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	KR
Atul Patel, Independent Chair, LPS Steering Group	AP
Jack Matthews, National Forest Company	JM
Tim Graham, Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust	TG
Rachel Dexter, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	RDe
Cllr B. L. Pain, Leicestershire County Council	BP
Simon Fisher, National Farmers' Union	SF
Graham Chilvers, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	GC

2. MINUTES OF CFRP MEETING ON 23RD JUNE

The minutes were agreed and accepted as a true record of the meeting.

I. Matters arising

Actions arising from the minutes will be picked up in agenda items.

- Gear change funding – JA updated on the programme. Funding is not currently available. The advice from Sustrans is to ensure that any desired active travel routes are embedded into Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans so that when funding does become available we are in a position to take advantage of it..

3. STEERING THE LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME – ORAL UPDATE (AP/JA)

I. Overview of progress (Julie Attard)

JA presented an update on the Landscape Partnership Scheme, highlighting key points and project work to date:

- Quarters 1-5 completed
- 72% are on track; 28% have minor issues, being mitigated

- 16 of the 18 projects underway
- Overall budget: on track, 6% spent to date
- Income: National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) income on track, 4% received
- Match Funding: 91.4% received or pledged, 8.6% to raise
- Steering group meeting regularly as scheduled
- Regular meetings with NLHF
- First Annual Review with NLHF completed on 7th July 2021
- Next Stakeholder Forum meeting scheduled February 2022
- No staffing issues
- Risks being managed – note ongoing impacts of Brexit and pandemic
- Visitor economy business audit completed

JA went on to discuss opportunities for partners to support Parish Council's with climate change mitigation activity.

JE welcomed progress to date and the assistance from all partners in continuing to deliver despite the difficulties presented by the pandemic.

RD reported issues of discharge into local watercourse. JE acknowledged the issue and emphasised the importance of raising this with partner organisations when the opportunity arises.

Action: JA will circulate social media links to partners.

Action: JA will consult with Partners about opportunities to support climate change mitigation activity at parish level so that future communication with parish councils can be better coordinated.

II. Funding Report (Julie Attard)

JA presented a funding report to the Board discussing three aspects of match funding:

- Cash Match: Target of £536,250, of which £454,278 pledged (£103,204 received); further £81,972 to raise by June 2025.
- In Kind: Target £302,866; 100% of this has been identified or pledged but will need to be logged consistently across the five-year project; c.15% logged so far.
- Volunteering: Target £114,050; 100% of this has been identified or pledged but will need to be logged consistently across the five-year project; c.33% logged so far.

JA went on to discuss funding priorities which include:

- Identifying and securing remaining cash match funding by July 2023
- Approaching major corporate donors
- Continuing to highlight opportunities for individuals to donate, including through donate button on the new website
- Approaching charitable trusts where appropriate
- Supporting partner organisations to apply for grants which will add value to the Scheme
- Asking partners to consider allocating underspends or unallocated relevant funds to the LPS

MB noted that Charnwood BC have some biodiversity net gain funds that could be useful and will discuss with JA.

MP asked whether the donate option on the website could be taken further by offering a return for donations or considering ongoing contributions.

JD suggested crowd funding could also be a useful way of bringing in donations.

JE thanked JA and asked for the opportunities identified to be considered further during the website development.

III. CFRP Website – Paper 2 (Julie Attard)

MP declared a conflict of interest relating to the tendering of the website and agreed not to participate in that part of the discussion.

JA noted that as detailed in the paper, the tender process is about to begin on the destination website and a decision will need to be made on whether to brand this as a Geopark (recommended by JA) or Regional Park. JA stressed that the decision needs to be made by all members to ensure the support of the partnership. A brief will go to the steering group for sign off in next couple of weeks and the website could go live in the new year.

MC supported the recommendation and suggested giving absent members seven days to agree or object on the proposal to move forward with Geopark branding. RD and MB also supported the recommendations.

JD asked whether public stakeholders should be consulted on branding changes. MP advised that a consultation would take place as well as launch events whereby the new logo launch would be the last step.

SL agreed with proposal to move forward with Geopark branding, noting that the core product from a user perspective is Charnwood Forest.

JE confirmed that the Board supported the recommendations for branding as Charnwood Forest Geopark and asked JA to circulate to all Board members for additional views.

Action: JA to circulate branding proposal and give Board members seven days to respond with comments or objections.

4. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGIONAL PARK

I. Geopark Designation – Oral update (Jack Matthews)

JA shared a video update from JM on the Geopark Designation highlighting:

- Continuing involvement in the UNESCO project, including Geo-food, and the Geo-Climbing project.
- Continuing to audit a number of sites with great potential.
- Conservation work having taken place at Bradgate Park to understand how to deal with historic graffiti.
- Looking forward to getting the Geo-Heritage volunteering programme running.
- Proposed partnership agreement would present opportunities for the Regional Park.

II. Draft Memorandum of Understanding between CFRP and Discovery UNESCO Global Geopark (Julie Attard)

JE asked members for any comments on the proposed Memorandum and views on how it should be taken forward. RD suggested that the MOU should be supported and this was agreed by the Board. Absent members would be given seven days to suggest amendments to the MOU or object, after which it would be signed.

JA noted that any minor changes can be signed off by the chair on behalf of the group.

Action: DB to notify absent Board members of the decision and give them seven days to respond with comments or objections. JA to let members know when the MoU has been signed off.

III. Planning

RBe provided an update on Charnwood Borough Council's emerging Local Plan. RBe reported a good response to the consultation which will be reviewed by the Planning Inspectorate around February 2022. The Policy on Charnwood Forest and the National Forest attracted 6-8 comments from organisations including Climate Action Leicester & Leicestershire, the National Forest Company, Parish Council's and Leicestershire County Council on matters such as improving bus travel and walking routes to attractions, tree planting and emphasis on fruit trees, protection against over-development, carbon reduction and greater protection of the forest.

MC provided an update from Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council reporting that they were revising wording currently including giving further weight to the importance of Neighbourhood Plans.

5. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

I. Mineral sites assessment – (Sam Lattaway)

SL updated on the minerals work discussed previously, with a tender process now underway to identify a suitable consultant to produce a report for the Board meeting in January 2022 with a view of a final report in February/March 2022. SL had met with Nic Thomas at Leicestershire County Council who gave his support to project.

RD asked that consultants consider options for climbing routes which could provide opportunities for the general public to get involved in climbing.

SL advised that at this point the report would look at the feasibility of quarries for suitable restorations and discussions with groups including the British Mountaineering Council to consider options would follow.

II. Tourism presentation (Martin Peters & Richard Drakeley)

MP presented an update on the tourism audit showing a map of the assets across the Regional Park, advising that this could be made available to partners once completed.

MP advised that a piece of work would now be undertaken to understand and interpret the results of the mapping exercise.

SL noted that some gaps on the map could indicate areas of important habitat rather than showing gaps in provision for potential development. SL asked whether assets can be added onto the map and MP advised that additions should be reported to him or JA.

JD advised that gaps on the map could be due to lack of knowledge in Google Listings – for example, Bradgate Park struggled to get Venison retailers listed highly near the Park itself.

RD asked whether assets in surrounding area such as Glenfield could be added.

JA advised that the mapping exercise will help with the LPS when siting community activities.

JOB asked whether opening times for assets could be included also.

JE thanked MP for the work and asked the Board to provide further comments and updates to MP / JA.

Action: All to pass comments and updates on the asset mapping to MP / JA.

RD presented an update on work on sustainable tourism accommodation. The Tourism Growth Plan for the National Forest was launched in 2017 which set a target for growth at 15% which could be achieved by overnight visitors. A Sustainable Tourism Accommodation Design Guide has now been produced to demonstrate what good building design can look like in terms of supporting the Forest's 25-year vision, to inspire change and show how tourist accommodation can contribute to net zero carbon, and to help create a sustainable destination. The design guide has been worked on in collaboration with local authorities and will target landowners, developers, investors, as well as planning authorities. The design guide is due to be launched late Autumn, together with an accelerator grant programme to help bring forward new accommodation proposals.

JE thanked RD and suggested that further details could be circulated to the Board.

Action: RD to circulate details of the Design Guide with the minutes.

III. Tree planting presentation (Sam Lattaway)

SL presented an update on Tree Planting including information on the need for trees, the England Trees Action Plan, work which has been completed and opportunities for tree planting in Charnwood. Partners can look at their landholdings to see if any are suitable for tree planting and are encouraged to work with Parish Council's and stakeholder groups.

This was welcomed by the Board and MB noted the importance of repurposing land for tree planting and asked whether there has been any consideration for land acquisitions. SL previously discussed this with JE and a sub-group could be set up to facilitate these discussions.

RD highlighted work with parishes on tree planting but noted the difficulty of arranging tree planting on streets and verges.

SL agreed that this is an issue and whilst discussions have taken place with local authorities, the issue is largely due to liability and ownership of the trees once planted, particularly in new developments. The Trees and Design Action Group are looking at this issue nationally.

Action: SL to pull together a group of interested parties to look at the issue more strategically across Charnwood Forest and report back.

IV. Next Stakeholder Forum

HS presented proposals for the next Stakeholder Forum outlined in the paper circulated to the Board. It is hoped that the event will be held at County Hall but is dependent on any further COVID-19 restrictions. All members agreed to the proposals. MB, JE and JOB offered contributions to funding for catering for the event.

6. PARTNER UPDATES

MB advised that the visitor centre Café lease at the Outwoods should be signed this week and refit is scheduled over the next month.

JD updated on the regional 'honeypot' work at Bradgate Park – ongoing discussions with Natural England and Heritage Conservation on planning for surfacing. Further updates should be available in the new year.

JOB noted Leicestershire County Council are in the process of developing a Carbon Reduction Roadmap for the County. A review of Risk of Climate Change on Council Services is near completion and one of the draft recommendations is the development of

a Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation Strategy & Plan for the Council and the County. A piece of research is also taking place into the Value of Trees. JE suggested an agenda item at a future meeting on this and offered support in the development of these pieces of work.

RD passed on negative feedback from volunteers who have reportedly had little opportunity for work to do on the Charnwood Trails project due to administrative issues. JA explained that there have been some unavoidable delays to capital works which has had a knock-on effect on other elements of the Trails project. The Doorstep walks are to be published with better mapping as downloadable guides on the website. There are further opportunities for volunteers to be involved in an audit of all PROW across the Regional Park.

Action: JA to pass on information to RD on PROWaudit for potential volunteer involvement

7. Any Other Business

None.

8. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Suggested dates: January 2022