

# **FORESTs MATTER**

## **Save Sherwood Forest Update January 2014**

### **Ramble in the Woods - Date & Venue Fixed**

This year's walk is on Saturday 22 March 2014 and the venue is Bestwood Country Park.

Bestwood is the largest of NCC's Country Parks and is easily accessible by public transport. The Trent-Barton 141, which runs between Nottingham, Mansfield & Sutton in Ashfield and Doyles Coaches 228, Bulwell & Hucknall, both serve the Country Park. The nearest bus stop is on Park Road, just outside the Country Park and a short walk to the Ramble's start point.

Start time is 1015 at the Dynamo House and the ramble will last between 1 & 1.5 hours. The Dynamo House also contains the café which serves tea, coffee, juice & homemade cakes from 1000. The Friends of Bestwood Country Park and Bestwood WI run the café and have offered to donate part of their morning's takings to Save Sherwood Forest.

It should be a great place to spend a Saturday morning so why not come along and help us celebrate World Forestry Day and the third anniversary of the people's victory to stop the forest sell off in 2011.

**There's also an opportunity** to volunteer for conservation work at Bestwood. One day events are running from January to March. If you are interested please see the attachment "Volunteer Days".

### **Biodiversity Offsetting - another one to watch?**

You probably heard Owen Paterson's announcement earlier in January that ancient woodland could be part of a building programme providing that 100 new trees were planted for every tree lost to the development. This is offsetting gone mad, but quite in keeping with the apparent Tory policy of favouring the needs of Developers over all else.

What is incomprehensible is that only last year he agreed with a panel of experts who said that some habitats, including ancient woodland, were unsuitable for offsetting. Of course it is probably just a ploy - he makes the announcement knowing full well that there will be a public outcry. He backs off giving us a victory while he quietly goes about allowing development in other parts of the PFE.

Save Sherwood Forest say that all woodland is precious, from centuries old forests to newly planted pit tips. It's all valuable to someone. With another year of lack lustre, below-target performance in tree planting we can ill afford to lose any woodland to development.

### **Forestry Commission Consultation**

- Several months ago the Forestry Commission (FC) put out a consultation paper titled ***Towards a New Management Body for the PFE*** (Public Forest Estate) and invited comment from interested parties. The last Update mentioned that Save Sherwood Forest had submitted their views (see attachment) and at the last FCN/FC/Defra Community Campaign Group meeting in December the Forestry Commission gave us the results. They had 250 submissions of which 160 were from external bodies. We were one of five Forest Campaign Network (FCN) affiliated organisations to respond. The consultation has provided detail which will be used in finalising the plans for the new body. The top ten themes were:
  1. Extensive support for a new independent body managing England's Public Forest Estate for the benefit of people, nature and the economy.
  2. Proposals for new PFEMO should not emphasise economic objectives and income generation to the detriment of other priorities. Income generation should be means a to an end, not an end in itself.
  3. Further emphasis on biodiversity, conservation, environment and public benefit is desirable in these proposals.
  4. Recognition that ecosystem services underpin everything in PFE, and need to drive the new body's economic model.
  5. Government long term commitment to funding new body needed, the body cannot be allowed to fail.
  6. The Guardians need real power, expertise, be genuinely representative of different stakeholder and sector interests, and a check and balance between political interference and failing management.
  7. The public charter should guarantee the PFE as a public asset, and set out financial commitments from Government.
  8. More detail needed on governance of new body, on how financial arrangements would work, on commercial activities and on accountability to parliament.
  9. Forestry functions should be kept in a separate body. Lack of clarity between responsibilities for different aspects of forestry policy and delivery needs sorting out
  10. Forest Research and plant health should be managed at a GB level.

Interestingly this is an almost identical list of issues that FCN talked to FC & Defra about in November 2012. I suppose the good thing is that more people are saying the same things to them, but how many more times do we need to tell them that these are our priorities?

#### **Developments in the New Public Forest Estate Management Organisation (PFEMO)**

At the December FCN/FC/Defra Community Campaign Groups meeting we were briefed on a number of developments. Chief among them were:

**Legislation.** There was no guarantee that legislation would be introduced in this Parliament even though that was Government's intention. This decision is taken at Cabinet level and it is anticipated that the Minister (Dan Rogerson) will give an update on policy implementation at the end of January most probably at the Stakeholder's Forum 29/01/2014.

It was confirmed that the draft legislation and all supporting documents will be published and open to pre-legislative scrutiny. We will have around three months to comment.

**PFEMO Mission & Objectives.** Although work is still in progress on this we were told that the draft mission and objectives set out below remain at the heart of the Government's vision for the new body.

Mission:

To own and manage the Public Forest Estate for the benefit of people, nature and the economy.

Objectives:

*Environmental Objective:* To protect and enhance the natural environment and wildlife on the Public Forest Estate.

*Social Objective:* To provide recreational and other social benefits to people visiting the Public Forest Estate.

*Economic Objective:* To pursue timber production and other trading objectives that contribute to the sustainability of the estate, to the local economy and to wider economic growth.

*Balancing Objective:* To achieve a reasonable balance between the environment, social and economic objectives in delivering the Mission.

**Payments for EcoSystem Services (PES)** Plans for the PFE to be partly funded via PES were well advanced with the model being put before the finance panel in December.

If this method of funding is adopted the PFE would cover the cost of its commercial forestry operations by selling timber and other commercial activity and the cost of providing public benefit would be covered by Government. This public benefit would include public access, wildlife biodiversity, nature conservation, care of public monuments. The actual cost has been estimated at around £200000 - £250000, remarkably close to the Independent Panel of Forestry's estimate.

The final figure will be negotiated and will be for "an agreed level of benefit" - the danger is if this level is set too low at the outset. However there was confirmation that Government did not see the PFE paying for itself in the foreseeable future but that it will become more financially sustainable. This is possibly why the idea of Government clawing back any profit the PFE makes has been withdrawn. Although there is always a chance that this will happen if the PFE starts to make large surpluses, there is no expectation of overall profit built into the financial model

**Guardians/Non-executive Directors.** Perhaps in answer to FCN's vociferous disappointment that Guardians appear to have little power, FC/Defra have come up with an idea where FCN or similar Community interest groups will be offered a seat on the main board as Non-executive Directors. This offer (if it actually is part of the deal) will also be offered to other "interest groups" such as conservation & sporting/recreation. These Board members will be responsible for making all strategic and policy decisions and will be responsible to Parliament. We've attached our response to this idea.

This expanded Board is not a replacement for the Guardians, but would be in addition to it. The Guardians would still have the role of advising the Board and scrutinising their decisions. There is still no movement from FC/Defra regarding the Guardians having a veto over land sales or other Board decisions.

It is absolutely no comfort to know that the Guardians can appeal to Owen Paterson to intervene on Land Sales!

### **European Elections 2014**

As mentioned in the last Update we contacted a number of organisations to see if there was any appetite for organising a *Hustings for Nottinghamshire on Environmental Policies*. We contacted around 17 organisations and had a rather miserable response. Of those that replied (about 50%) none offered any help with the organisation of the event although five said that they would certainly send people with questions on the night.

Because we are not in a position financially or have enough volunteers to mount the event on our own we have decided to shelve the idea.

### **Funding for Tree Planting - a small success!**

Last Update asked you to sign Woodland Trust petition regarding Funding for Tree Planting in England. I don't know whether you did or not, but we've had some progress. On Thursday 09 January, Dan Rogerson, Minister for Forestry, announced a financial package that would see 2000 hectares of woodland planted in 2014/15.

This falls well short of the 5000 hectares promised in the Policy Statement, but at least shows that we had some effect in badgering Government. This year's funding is however something of a stop-gap measure as from 2015 the Rural Development Programme will fund tree planting programmes and will hopefully get us back on track to increase our woodland cover.

See [www.gov.uk/government/news/four-million-trees-to-be-planted-next-year](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/four-million-trees-to-be-planted-next-year)

### **Your Views**

If you have any comments or views on any of the above or would like to make an input into what we are doing please get in touch via [sherwoodforestforever@gmail.com](mailto:sherwoodforestforever@gmail.com) .

Bob Thacker  
Save Sherwood Forest  
January 2014

IF YOU NO LONGER WANT TO RECEIVE UPDATES AND NOTIFICATIONS FROM SAVE SHERWOOD FOREST PLEASE LET US KNOW AND WE'LL REMOVE YOU FROM THE LIST STRAIGHT AWAY. Please email [sherwoodforestforever@gmail.com](mailto:sherwoodforestforever@gmail.com)