

RECORD OF URGENT DECISION

Date: 23 May 2022

Lead Officer: Matthew Finch, Director – Communities & Environment, Ext: 5716

Part D, Section 6 of the Council’s Constitution provides that the Head of Paid Service (or in their absence a nominated deputy) shall have delegated authority to take urgent decisions following consultation with the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer (or their deputies). In respect of Executive Functions the Head of Paid Service (or their nominated deputy) will consult with the Leader of the Council (or in their absence the Deputy Leader or in their absence a Portfolio Holder), and in respect of non-Executive functions the Head of Paid Service (or their nominated deputy) will consult with the Chairman of the Council (or in their absence the Vice-Chairman of the Council or in their absence the Chairman of the relevant Committee).

If the matter is likely to be a key decision and has not been advertised for a minimum of 28 clear days on the Council’s website, the decision can still be taken if a) it is impracticable to defer the decision until it has been possible for 28 clear days’ notice to be given; b) the Monitoring Officer has informed the Chairman of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee.

Note – this urgent decision record will be reported to the next available meeting of the Full Council.

Decision Record Summary	
Nature of Decision	Open report / Non key decision
Decision Title	Sherwood Forest Landscape Recovery Pilot Bid
Summary of Decision	To participate in a bid, being led by the Wildlife Trust, which has the potential to transform investment in the habitats, species and landscape of the Sherwood Forest area, through attracting substantial DEFRA and private funding streams.
Decision Taken	To approve the inclusion of Intake Wood, Vicar Water Country Park and Sherwood Heath in the Sherwood Forest Landscape Recovery Bid.
Decision Taker and Consultation	Head of Paid Service, Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner, Safer, Greener and local Ward Members.
Reason for Urgency	The Wildlife Trust was working on a very tight timescale with a submission date of 24 May 2022, which did not give sufficient time for a decision to be taken by the Portfolio Holder which would have then be subject to call-in.

1.0 **Background**

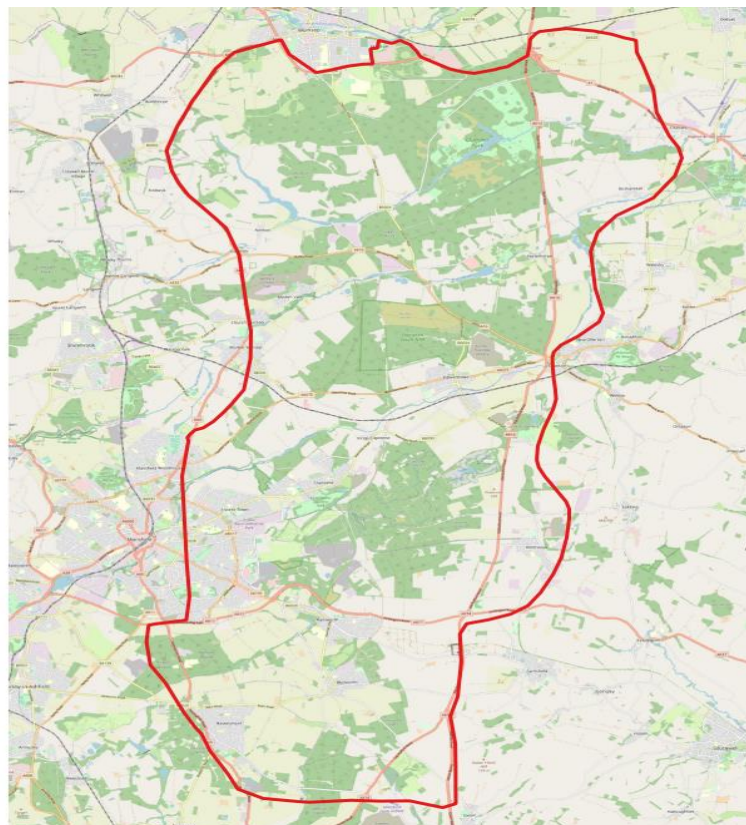
1.1 For a number of years the Council has been the beneficiary of a number of national schemes designed to support and enhance the maintenance of important habitats on land that we manage through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the Higher Level Stewardship. Both of these schemes are coming to an end and our existing agreements all cease in 2023. To be replaced by 3 new environmental land management schemes. These are:

- The Sustainable Farming Incentive
- Local Nature Recovery
- Landscape Recovery

1.2 The Landscape Recovery scheme will complement the Sustainable Farming Incentive, which will support action at farm level to make farming more sustainable, and Local Nature Recovery, which will support action at local level to make space for nature alongside food production.

1.3 This scheme is for landowners and managers who want to take a more radical and large-scale approach to producing environmental and climate goods on their land, and represents a new approach to supporting long-term, significant habitat restoration and land use change of the sort that will be essential to achieving the environmental ambitions of the government and many other bodies.

1.4 We have been approached by Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust who are leading on a bid which will encompass much of the Sherwood area. They have supplied an indicative map (below), but the exact scope is changing as additional land owners express their willingness to be involved.



1.5 Newark and Sherwood District Council maintains 3 significant plots of land which are of interest to the project:

1. Vicar Water Country Park
2. Intake Woods
3. Sherwood Heath

1.6 The Wildlife Trust are leading on the bid, which has the potential to transform investment in the habitats, species and landscape of the Sherwood Forest area, through attracting substantial Defra and private funding streams. This is an opportunity to deliver some of our shared ambitious aims for species recovery and habitat conservation, restoration and re-creation, across multiple partners and landowners. The Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is developing this bid in close partnership with the National Trust and Miner2Major Team, on behalf of a wide group of public, private and NGO landowners and organisations, and will act as the lead body for the bid. This means that we will submit the bid on behalf of the partners and landowners, and lead the Development Phase of the project, in collaboration with all relevant parties, and with a Project Steering Group drawn from those partners and landowners.

1.7 The bidding process is highly competitive, but by working in partnership we believe we have a chance to secure a step change in resources for the long term management and restoration of habitats and species in the area, and for the engagement of local communities in their landscape, with the health and wellbeing benefits that will accrue from that.

1.8 Aims of the Scheme

1.8.1 The intended species recovery priorities (over 20 years) are:

Range expansion

- Scarce woodland birds – including lesser spotted woodpecker, redstart, willow tit
- Scarce heathland birds – nightjar, woodlark, tree pipit
- Water voles
- Brook lamprey and trout
- Farmland birds of conservation concern
- Rare plants – cross-leaved heath, creeping willow, bilberry, petty whin.
- Woodland bats
- Rare invertebrates of woodland, wood pasture and heathland

Reintroduction

- Silver studded blue butterfly
- Adder
- Red squirrel
- Beavers

1.8.2 The scheme aims to build on the excellent Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping work which was conducted in 2021, by many of the partners involved in this bid, turning opportunity into reality by;

- Creating and managing Sherwood's habitats, with funding for 20+ years to manage them. This could apply to any priority habitats including wood pasture, new native woodland, heathland, acid grassland and riverine/floodplain habitats.
- Connecting areas of habitats across the landscape, so that there is more wildlife within a thriving, productive and sustainable farmed landscape
- Bringing back species that have been lost or are near extinction, such as water voles, silver studded blue butterfly, and bilberry, and expand populations of farmland, heathland and woodland birds and bats.
- Delivering nature-based solutions, such as Natural Flood Management, Carbon sequestration and pollinator services with appropriate funding to recompense lost income for landowners.
- Working together to establish a consistent way to secure private finance for habitat creation from Biodiversity Net Gain, Carbon offsetting and Phosphate offsetting, that can be accessed by all landowners (private, public, NGO) who are interested.
- Working collaboratively to develop an access plan for the whole area, which increases access for the public on suitable sites where landowners welcome it and where this will benefit the health and wellbeing of local communities. By engaging multiple parties, the plan will also agree to measures to reduce pressures on the most sensitive sites, and tackle illegal and unwanted access.
- Providing a network of high quality habitats that link key protected nature conservation sites together, demonstrating how farming and wildlife can benefit each other, creating a platform to complement the Sustainable Farming Incentive and Local Nature Recovery elements the new funding schemes.
- Increasing the positive engagement and awareness of local communities for their local Sherwood Forest landscape and wildlife.
- Securing a step change in training for skills and employability in the conservation land management sector.

1.9 **The development phase could include:**

- Developing a detailed, robust scientific plan for the recovery of key species for the Sherwood Forest area.
- Agreeing the details of potential habitat schemes with interested landowners, including costs, long term management plans and payment rates, with support towards the cost of preparing those agreements.
- Undertaking any necessary mapping, including the potential for stacking nature-based solutions, such as priority areas for Nature Flood Management, Carbon sequestration and new habitat creation.
- Supported by Defra, developing a payment model and most effective form of brokering to bring funds through BNG, Carbon offsetting and Phosphate offsetting to invest in the habitats and landscape of the area.
- Setting up relevant legal agreements such as conservation covenants.
- Testing the feasibility of some of the options, eg. the value of new wood pasture to sequester Carbon or reduce run-off, and increase water infiltration to the aquifer, or the potential to increase processing and marketing capacity for small woodland products.
- Engaging local communities in protecting and valuing their local landscapes, particularly on publicly owned land, through both well established and innovative techniques and programmes.
- Establishing some of the core operations that could serve the area, such as a local-origin tree nursery.

- Developing a multi-partner access plan to achieve a better balance between visitor access, protection of sensitive sites and farmland, and health and wellbeing of local communities.
- Using the learning points from the successful Miner2Major delivery to achieve a step change in all of the above, particularly looking at the potential for skills training and building capacity to manage the new habitats in the future.

1.10 Timetable

The stages projects must follow and indicative timescales from Defra are:

1. Application date 24th May 2022
2. Evaluation (6 weeks)
3. Enrolment (8 weeks)
4. Project development (6 to 24 months)
5. Project implementation (20+ years)

1.11 Commitment at this Stage

At this stage all we will be providing is an indication of intent around the areas of land to be entered into the scheme, it is acknowledged that as further information becomes available about funding streams and opportunities etc. landowners and managers may increase or decrease the areas of land involved.

2.0 **Options Considered and Reasons for the Decision**

To support an innovative approach to species recovery across the Sherwood Landscape.

3.0 **Implications**

3.1 Equalities Implications

One of the initial development stages of the bid being considered is a multi-partner access plan to achieve a better balance between visitor access, protection of sensitive sites and farmland, and health and wellbeing of local communities.

3.2 Financial Implications (FIN22-23/950)

The Council currently receives circa £18,000 per annum from both of the schemes which is currently built into the Council's budget. When the current schemes come to an end in 2023, there will be a shortfall in the Council's budget by this figure in 2023/24, as expenditure will still need to be incurred at the same rate in order to maintain the pieces of land.

Where the Council is successful in bidding for the funding identified above, this will partly mitigate the loss in income identified above. It is not currently possible to assess the total amount of grant funding available from bidding for the schemes outlined above. Any shortfall in the grant income will increase the cost to the Council of providing these services.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None