



Second Round Application

Summary

Name of your organisation

National Forest Company

Project title

In no more than 15 words, please choose a title which you think best describes your project. This will be seen externally, on our website and by our decision makers so please ensure that you choose a title that you are happy for a wide range of people to see.

Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme

Reference number

LP-16-02021

Date received

18/10/2019

Project summary

In no more than 150 words, summarise your project. We will use this text to tell people about your project, including our decision takers.

600 million years ago, a volcano erupted in the ocean near the South Pole. The fossilised remains of the mysterious creatures it buried, capture the first moments of complex life on earth and are found in only two places world-wide: Charnwood Forest and Newfoundland. Since then, Charnwood's ancient rocks have created a mosaic of wildlife-rich habitats and distinctive landscapes, shaped across the centuries by its communities. Today much of this remarkable heritage is hidden from all but the most inquisitive and is increasingly at serious risk of diminishing to the point that it is lost.

This Scheme will celebrate Charnwood Forest's internationally important volcanic legacy. Eighteen projects will inspire people to explore its rich landscape, understand its diverse heritage, and develop skills to care for it. It will enable the partnership to coordinate management at landscape scale and finally secure the future of this extraordinary place.

Section two: The heritage

In this section, tell us about the heritage your project focuses on and why it is valued.

2a What is the heritage your project focuses on?

Charnwood Forest in north western Leicestershire is a unique landscape, marked out by its volcanic geology. The rugged, granite outcrops on its hilltops rise steeply as the first area of 'upland' when travelling from south-east Britain, with far-reaching views over Coalville, Leicester, Loughborough and beyond. Its upland character is in stark contrast to the surrounding areas of Leicestershire, which are characterised by a rolling landscape dominated by farmland. It is an island rich in geodiversity, biodiversity, historic and cultural interest, forming distinct layers of heritage.

Geology & Fossils

The Ediacaran and Precambrian rocks of Charnwood are some of the oldest in England, formed 600 million years ago in a chain of volcanic islands near the South Pole. The volcanic debris settled in the surrounding seas, preserving organisms trapped in them as fossils. In 1957, schoolboy Roger Mason found a fossil in Precambrian rock that was the first example of complex life on Earth. This discovery profoundly changed our understanding of the evolution of life on our planet. Named *Charnia masoni* (after Charnwood and Mason), it is of international importance. It has subsequently been found in a handful of locations around the world but only Charnwood and Newfoundland hold the oldest lifeforms. Of the sites in Newfoundland, one is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the other is an aspiring Global GeoPark. Charnwood Forest is at least as important as these.

Landscape and wildlife

The volcanic geology created steep, rocky ground and thin soils difficult to build on or improve for agriculture. Because of this, Charnwood still contains a wealth of nationally and internationally important biodiversity and geodiversity. Charnwood Forest covers only 8% of Leicestershire yet contains, by area, 67% of its RIGS, 51% of its SSSIs, 43% of its ancient woodlands and 32% of its Local Wildlife Sites.

Charnwood is recognised in Landscape and Historic Character Assessments as a special place in the East Midlands and is a Wildlife Trust 'Living Landscape'.

Key habitats are:

- regionally important heathland/acid grassland on exposed areas of rock, different to northern moorland as it has developed on granite and has a wider variety of plant species
- woodlands, which form a strong part of local character
- neutral grasslands where extensive grazing has led to species-rich swards
- freshwater streams, often at the foot of narrow valleys, and reservoirs

Important species distinctive to the area include:

- Charnwood Spider
- Adder, Common Lizard and other reptiles
- rare lichens

Human activity and influence

Recent archaeological investigations at Bradgate Park identified evidence of the oldest known built domestic structures in the UK, dating back to Upper Palaeolithic hunter gatherers 15,000 years ago. There are numerous examples of exploitation of the landscape by prehistoric peoples from Neolithic handaxes made from Charnwood's stone, found as far afield as East Anglia and Derbyshire, to Bronze and Iron Age hill forts and enclosures. The Iron Age Coritani tribe's name for the area, 'Carn', meaning stone, has survived through the millennia. Recent landscape surveys using laser technology have shown that there is still much to learn about how pre-historic communities used this landscape.

The Domesday Book recorded scant settlement in Charnwood Forest. Then, as today, most of the settlements were around its edges. Much of the interior was regarded as manorial "waste" though it had value for its natural resources, woodland, heath and common pasture. Less productive areas were gifted by medieval lords to found religious priories such as those at Charley, Ulverscroft, and Grace Dieu. For centuries these religious communities played a significant role in local society. Dissolved in the 1530s, their legacy remains in the ruined buildings and the woodlands, grasslands and local institutions that still bear their names.

Deer Parks were an important playground for the wealthy in the Middle Ages. No fewer than 12 were created

in Charnwood Forest. Bradgate Park is a rare survivor that is one of the most loved and visited sites in Charnwood today. Lady Jane Grey, Queen of England for just 9 days in 1553, was born at Bradgate House located within the Park. The house, now in ruins, was one of the earliest brick built mansions in the country.

Quarrying expanded rapidly from the 16th century. By the late 1800s, Charnwood granite had become the main source of aggregates for southern England, used in many of London's grand buildings, including the stone setts in Buckingham Palace's driveway. The use of local stone and slate led to development of a characteristic vernacular architecture such as Swithland slate roofs and the pink granite buildings of Mountsorrel. Granite was also used to build the distinctive stone walls that line many of Charnwood's roads and historic bridges such as King William's Bridge, built in 1696 to accommodate the King's wide carriage.

In more recent times, Charnwood's landscape has been shaped by agriculture, transport and industry. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Enclosure completely transformed the landscape with some 11,000 acres of land enclosed through a single Act. Any land that could support crops was cleared and drained and thousands of acres of heathland were lost. Land was rigidly partitioned and boundaries marked with stone walls or hedges. Loss of common lands threatened the existence of the village peasantry and provoked fierce resistance, recorded in the Charnwood Opera, one of the only surviving examples of an 18th-century protest ballad against Enclosure.

Clear evidence of 18th and 19th century industrial history can be seen in Charnwood's villages: footwear manufacture (Anstey), framework-knitting (Shepshed) and mining (Whitwick). Victorian engineering projects of new railways and reservoirs had even more tangible impacts on the landscape.

Charnwood's monastic tradition was revived in 1835 with the formation of Mount St Bernard Abbey, the first permanent monastery founded in England since the Reformation and its only Cistercian house. The building, constructed from local granite, took ninety years to complete. It provided charity for Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine of the 1840s, and the unemployed from Coalville during the economic depressions of the 1870s and during the General Strike of 1926. Famous visitors to the abbey included Florence Nightingale, William Wordsworth, and Edward Burne-Jones.

During the World War II, Charnwood's quiet wooded landscape hid ammunition awaiting dispatch for use in the D-Day landings and Beaumanor Hall became a Signals Intelligence collection site, gathering enemy communications to pass to Bletchley Park.

With so much happening in such a small area, there is a rich social history to Charnwood. Even the Charnia fossil's discovery has a little-known layer of social commentary. One had actually been found the previous year by 15-year-old Tina Negus, whose teacher unfortunately dismissed its significance. Even earlier another schoolboy was inspired to explore Charnwood Forest looking for fossils: David Attenborough. His passion for the environment has arguably had greater impact on the appreciation and understanding of the natural world than anyone else alive today.

Charnwood Forest has importance and significance to a wide range of different people and communities. Residents value the countryside on their doorsteps. For farmers and landowners, it is a source of income, pride and something to pass on to future generations. To historians, it is a place which still has much to teach us about our ancient and more recent pasts. For geologists, its rocks and fossils continue to yield new information about the earliest moments of life on earth. To naturalists, it is a jewel of biodiversity in the East Midlands, and visitors from near and far find a beautiful landscape with much more to offer than they may have first realised.

The Charnwood Forest Regional Park (CFRP) was established in 2012. Its 158 square kilometre boundary, identified by independent consultants using consultation informed by landscape character, is the boundary for the Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS). The CFRP has a wide membership bringing together key delivery bodies with those who use or value Charnwood Forest.

Socially and economically, there is great variation within and around Charnwood. Deprivation data show that it contains communities among the most and least deprived in England, with more significant areas of deprivation just outside the area, especially in parts of Leicester and Loughborough. The surrounding populations are famously diverse, with large populations of South Asian heritage and increasing numbers from Eastern Europe. Census data shows the population of Leicester rising by over 47,000 (16%) since 2001. Public Health England profiles state that the health of people in Leicestershire is generally better than the

England average but in Leicester it is generally worse and there are significant health deprivation issues in Coalville and Loughborough.

Public transport in the area radiates from the urban centres of Leicester, Loughborough and Coalville. Although bus routes link villages to these towns, they tend to follow the main road network only serving the margins and do not operate on Sundays or Bank Holidays. The rural tourism economy is underdeveloped, with a dearth of high quality accommodation to encourage longer stays. Consultation has highlighted the importance of careful visitor management to ensure that increased visitor numbers do not spoil the qualities that make Charnwood Forest special.

2b Is your heritage considered to be at risk?

Yes

Please provide information on why your heritage is considered to be at risk and in what way.

Many of the features and habitats that make up the character of Charnwood Forest face growing threats which are eroding its landscape and heritage value.

A report commissioned during the development phase, highlighted many threats to Charnwood's globally important fossils. The greatest threat is the near total loss of capacity to support and coordinate geoheritage conservation activities. In the absence of this capacity, knowledge, investment and data there are few means to manage or strategically mitigate direct threats. This increases the risk to Charnwood's geoheritage considerably. Other threats include: neglect, overgrowth of exposures, irresponsible collecting, accidental damage, weathering, and inappropriate development.

A lack of management of some key habitats is leading to a decline in the characteristic mosaic of woodland, pasture and heathland, and a reduction in their value for biodiversity. While much of the acid grassland and heathland is managed, smaller areas in the wider countryside risk being overrun by bracken or scrub. Charnwood's fragile neutral grasslands are its most sensitive and endangered habitat. Poor management can quickly wipe out habitats that have taken hundreds of years to establish.

In 1975, a Nature Conservancy Council report described the losses of habitats and species in Charnwood over the previous century and the threats that were then arising from quarrying, agricultural change, recreation, air pollution and road improvements. In 2009, Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust's 'Charnwood Forest – A Living Landscape' report found that conservation interest had declined yet further: key sites had lost plant species; streams and reservoirs had become eutrophic; habitats had been lost to development; farmland bird species had dwindled; and wildflower grasslands had been lost to poor management or neglect. The report recognised landscape-scale problems of habitat fragmentation, which isolates populations of species and weakens the resilience of ecological networks. Information on the whereabouts and condition of important habitats is limited and often out of date. Without this, it is difficult to identify habitats at risk and to engage with landowners to remedy the situation.

While many distinctive vernacular buildings are included in Conservation Areas or are listed for their heritage importance, they, and many others that aren't listed, are at risk from loss due to unsympathetic alteration or neglect, including five Listed Buildings on the Heritage at Risk Register. Charnwood's stone walls, so characteristic of the area, have no protective designations and are gradually disappearing. Many have been lost to field enlargement, lack of understanding of their construction, poor maintenance and the growing scarcity of skilled wallers. Recent LiDAR surveys have shown the archaeological potential hidden in woodland and on farmland. Hidden features are at risk of accidental damage through unsympathetic land management practices not out of malice but because they have not been identified and recorded.

Construction of the M1 in the 1960s created a significant scar through the landscape, splitting Charnwood Forest in two, causing habitat fragmentation and creating noise pollution. A less obvious effect of this has been to change how Charnwood is perceived. Many local people now only 'see' the area to the east of the motorway and this puts the heritage to the west of the motorway at risk of neglect. Who will fight to protect it, if people do not even realise that this area is part of Charnwood Forest?

There is considerable development pressure at Charnwood's edges and in the surrounding towns and cities. It is currently proposed to build at least 117,900 homes in Leicester and Leicestershire between 2011 and 2036 to meet the demands of a growing population. This equates to 4,716 homes per year. There is continuing high demand for aggregates from Charnwood and, if not managed sensitively, this has the potential to create further visual intrusion.

Indirect pressures arise from growth through the increase in visitors, particularly to 'honeypot' sites to the east of the motorway. Bradgate Park is now estimated to receive 500,000 visitors per year, while Beacon Hill Country Park receives at least 130,000. Pressures on these sites have impacted their habitats and character: high footfall leads to erosion of paths and internationally important fossils in public sites have been damaged both accidentally and deliberately. At peak times, parking spills out onto rural roads or local villages, exacerbating a problem where traffic has increased in volume and speed. The lack of a joined up, promoted network of off-road paths, together with a scarcity of public transport, limits options for visitors to move between sites without using cars.

There is an urgent, pressing need to grow a committed body of supporters and volunteers for Charnwood to

help mitigate the effects of some of the challenges the Forest is facing. Many of our local voluntary organisations have an ageing membership and volunteer numbers are shrinking as people become more caught up in the demands of modern life. We need the public to be custodians of this landscape and to help look after it. An absence of advocates and volunteers is as great a threat to Charnwood's heritage as anything else.

2c Does your project involve work to physical heritage, such as buildings, collections, landscapes or habitats?

Yes

Tell us the name of the building(s), collections, landscape or habitat area

Landscapes and habitats: The third-party grant schemes extend across Charnwood Forest. Partnership projects confirmed include capital works at Bradgate Park, Beacon Hill and Broombriggs Farm County Park and the Outwoods. Habitat restoration and management works will be carried out in Ulverscroft (neutral grasslands), Groby (woodland) and along the Wood and Black Brooks (natural flood management). Capital works will also be carried out to public Rights of Way between the south of Loughborough and the north of Leicester.

Built heritage: Stone walls at publicly accessible sites.

Does your organisation have the freehold of the building or land, or own outright the heritage items that your project focuses on?

Yes

Are there any legal conditions, restrictions or covenants associated with the heritage asset which may affect your project?

No

Has a condition survey been undertaken for the heritage asset in the last five years?

Yes

Does your organisation have, or are you planning to take out, a mortgage or other loans secured on the building or land, or heritage items?

No

Does a project partner have, or are planning to take out, a mortgage or other loans secured on the building or land, or heritage items?

No

For landscape projects, please provide an Ordnance Survey grid reference for your landscape.

SK506 122

2d Does your project involve the acquisition of a building, land or heritage items?

No

Please tick any of the following that apply to your heritage:

Accredited Museum, Gallery or Archive

Designated or Significant (Scotland) Collection

DCMS funded Museum, Library, Gallery or Archive

World Heritage Site

☒ Grade I or Grade A listed building**How many buildings of this type are included in your project?**

4

☒ Grade II* or Grade B listed building**How many buildings of this type are included in your project?**

20

☒ Grade II, Grade C or Grade C(S) listed building**How many buildings of this type are included in your project?**

333

☒ Local list**How many buildings of this type are included in your project?**

357

☒ Scheduled Ancient Monument**How many monuments of this type are included in your project?**

23

Registered historic ship

✕ Conservation Area

Registered Battlefield

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or National Scenic Area (NSA)

National Park

✕ National Nature Reserve

Ramsar site

✕ Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Site (RIGS)

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or e-SAC

Special Protection Areas (SPA)

Registered Park or Garden

Section three: Your project

In this section, tell us about your project. Make sure you include all your planned activities, and capital works if applicable.

3a Describe what your project will do.

We will engage people with Charnwood Forest, creating more widespread recognition of its importance, enthralling visitors, generating local pride and enabling communities to play an active role in enhancing, protecting and celebrating its special qualities. We will tell the story of Charnwood focussing on its volcanic legacy which underpins and shapes so much of what makes the area unique. We will restore value to its landscape, communities and economy through a suite of projects delivered under three themes:

Explore Charnwood

We will create 'sense of place' through signage, access and welcoming features so that diverse audiences can get there, get around, enjoy the heritage, benefit their health and wellbeing, travel more sustainably and stay longer.

'Charnwood Trails': We will improve priority Rights of Way and create a joined up network of 34 clear, themed, guided and self-guided walks and cycle routes from settlements and honeypot sites. We will create or improve 10km of more accessible trails from Leicester and Loughborough and improve safety at key points. A 'Charnwood for All' guide will map the accessibility of 5 routes, opening Charnwood up to a wider range of mobility. This will enable more people to access heritage sites and features by sustainable means.

'Choose how you travel': We will promote sustainable transport by enhancing and integrating existing information services, and by providing cycling maintenance, road safety courses and guided bus rides. We will research the potential for new sustainable transport options to fill gaps in bus provision.

'Volcano on your Doorstep': A community outreach project to enable a wider range of people to engage with Charnwood's landscape heritage. The project includes: mass participation through annual roadshows and large-scale events to reach approximately 10,000 people, digital participation, and an intensive heritage and health programme, involving a small number of target groups over a longer period. The latter will provide regular doses of nature through supported visits and a green prescription scheme for around 100 people from communities with high levels of deprivation, particularly in Coalville (such as Greenhill and Agar Nook), Loughborough and Leicester, individuals with physical disabilities, limited mobility, or moderate mental health difficulties.

'A warm welcome': Providing a high quality experience for visitors by improving small-scale tourism facilities, the quality and welcome of sites and the coherence of the visitor offer. We will deliver training for at least 20 businesses to enable them to learn about Charnwood's heritage and support them to improve and coordinate their offers. Visitor information hubs will be created at 15 sites across the Forest and a new website will provide a one-stop shop for visitors to find out about the Forest.

Understand Charnwood

We will bring Charnwood's heritage to life by engaging people to unearth and record its history. We will interpret heritage in accessible and innovative ways for a range of audiences, engendering greater appreciation of the importance of Charnwood Forest, creating a greater sense of community pride and bringing new audiences and visitors.

'Unearthing what's special about Charnwood': We will encourage and enable people to explore and research Charnwood's history and archaeology. Building on the results of the lottery-funded Charnwood Roots project, we will use LiDAR to survey the remainder of the area for unrecorded archaeological features to achieve a complete picture of the landscape. We will carry out further research inspired by Charnwood Roots. More than 500 volunteers will support landscape surveys, community digs and archival research to discover, record, analyse and share Charnwood's economic, social and cultural history.

'Celebrating Charnwood': Engaging people through a variety of art forms and events to record and celebrate local heritage, stories and traditions. This will include a substantial schools project, online collaborations with other global sites with Ediacaran fossils and participation in the National Forest Timber Festival. We will develop participatory community arts projects which help the public to engage with decision-making about Charnwood, its management, and its future.

'A Learning landscape': An outdoor learning programme which develops facilities in 13 primary, 3 secondary and 3 special schools and 5 community spaces and engages people of all ages to learn in and about the landscape. This will include training in outdoor learning for teachers, Forest School networking events and an education pack linked the National Curriculum to teach children about the formation of Charnwood's landscape.

'Fire your imagination': This project will bring Charnwood's geoheritage to life for new audiences. We will create a digital projection that can be viewed in a 360 degree pop-up dome. This will tour Charnwood, reaching at least 3,500 people. We will also create new interpretation for at least 15 hub sites around the Forest and other innovative heritage experiences, such as a shadow play delivered in one of the quarries. Finally, we will help partners to create and coordinate their interpretation through a new interpretive framework and guidelines.

'Charnwood foods and products': This project will provoke conversations about produce from the Forest, reduce environmental impacts and support small producers. We will map the Edible Forest, including fruit and nut trees and community orchards, identify veteran trees and create management plans for them. We will plant 3 new orchards and/or woodland allotments and bring 5 orchards/woodland allotments into community management. We will deliver 3 sustainable food projects focussing on food waste, food production and food heritage. We will support producers to help them identify how they can use Charnwood's heritage to develop and market new products.

Care for Charnwood:

We will provide a step change in the restoration of Charnwood's heritage and put more sustainable management practices into place through organisations working together, use of community enterprise and volunteering, and improved training and skills. This will help make the landscape more resilient in the face of growth pressures, providing more and enhanced green infrastructure, better management of heritage and people to prevent loss and deterioration and more local buy-in to help protect the area in the long-term.

'A coherent wildlife network': A bigger, better, more joined up approach to managing Charnwood Forest, linking up and extending out from the central area where the best wildlife habitats remain. This will bring grassland habitats into management, create better connectivity across woodland blocks and deliver at least 15 natural flood management improvements. The project will grow a new community of wildlife recorders who will log at least 10,000 new records and will also include a special project focussing on the eponymous Charnwood Spider.

'Charnwood Rocks': This project will address some of the principal threats to Charnwood's increasingly vulnerable geoheritage and re-build capacity for geoheritage conservation to secure a sustainable future for some of the world's most important sites. It will include a systematic audit of fossil sites, a conservation research project to establish the best methods to care for them and lay foundations for an application to UNESCO for Global GeoPark status. Finally, it will create the Charnwood Forest Story Book to help stakeholders to create their own interpretation and link their sites to the wider story of Charnwood's geology.

'Built from volcanoes': This project will investigate and map the condition of Charnwood's stone walls in order to better understand their complex construction and establish how best to care for them. This will include a Citizen Science project and a specialist lichen survey which will help us understand the walls' history and construction. We will establish an apprenticeship programme to give young people and/or career changers an opportunity to develop skills in stone wall restoration. Repairs will be carried out at 10 publicly accessible sites.

'Charnwood Forest Volunteers': A coordinated volunteer initiative to grow and support a committed team of volunteers actively caring for Charnwood and to better coordinate volunteering across the Forest. We will increase volunteering from within the urban communities of Leicester, Loughborough and Coalville and will build capacity amongst local community groups to help them adapt and develop new, flexible volunteering opportunities.

'Friends of the Volcano': Coordinating the development of a network of local community interest/friends of groups, providing and signposting them to advice, training and grants to improve skills and build capacity. In addition, local voluntary groups will work together to complete 5 community challenges which will be drawn from recommendations made in the Landscape Character Assessment and the Interpretation Audit and Plan.

'Resilient honeypot sites': Bradgate Park, Beacon Hill and the Outwoods are the most visited sites in Charnwood Forest. We will enhance their welcome, improve facilities and accessibility, and support coordinated management and interpretation. Interventions will be tailored to each site but will include habitat, path and parking improvements and interpretation.

'Heritage Skills Training Programme': Creating a coordinated programme of heritage skills training, linked to current provision. We will deliver 100 training sessions and 1,250 volunteers will develop new skills. Training will include stone walling, hedge laying, woodland and heathland management, wildlife recording, geology, landscape surveying and wood crafts, including making Gimson-style furniture (for which the National Trust's Stoneywell Cottage is famous). We will maintain an online directory of training providers and create a single point of information for training opportunities.

'Community heritage advice and grants scheme': Third party small grants (up to £5,000), for communities to restore, research, celebrate, access and interpret their local heritage. A minimum of 20 projects will be delivered and a legacy event will be held to present results and consider future collaborations and funding opportunities.

'Managing the landscape': A grant scheme (up to £10,000), for farmers and landowners to fund enhancement of boundaries, habitats, buildings, archaeology and access, while supporting diversification options. This will allow us to further address recommendations made in the Landscape Character Assessment and Biodiversity Audit.

3b Explain what need and opportunity your project will address.

"No one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced." Sir David Attenborough.

Charnwood Forest is a fascinating and valuable landscape, but this is not recognised. In 2017, Charnwood Borough was named the most average place in Britain. This perception is exemplified by the RSA Heritage Index: of 325 local authority areas in England, the three overlapping Charnwood Forest perform poorly, coming 260th (North West Leicestershire), 284th (Hinckley & Bosworth) and 299th (Charnwood). Yet we know that Charnwood is anything but average: it has some of the most remarkable heritage assets in the world.

There is a need to share this heritage and draw together disparate parts of the story of Charnwood Forest and make it relevant to residents and visitors. Otherwise, we will not engage them in exploring and learning about Charnwood and we will not move them to care for it.

During the development phase, we have engaged world experts on Charnwood's geoheritage and have secured their support. There has never been a better opportunity to agree a narrative for Charnwood and express it in a way that is relevant to people. The partnership is now strong enough and motivated to take on the challenge of securing Charnwood's future.

Substantial funds are required to tackle the difficulties Charnwood faces. The features of biodiversity, geodiversity and historic interest that make it valuable are owned or controlled by different landowners. There is a need to coordinate management on a landscape scale, or else partners risk missing the benefits that working more closely with other organisations and, more importantly, local communities can bring.

Another challenge is the lack of up-to-date information on the heritage resource. A wealth of information is held in and around Charnwood, but much of it is becoming dated. Some important geological data is now inaccessible. There is a need to consolidate and update heritage information to inform and prioritise the management of the heritage resource and to help interpret the stories of Charnwood.

Charnwood Forest lacks a joined-up network of paths and bridleways that allow users to move within it. It also lacks promoted routes to get users from surrounding settlements into Charnwood. Combined with poor public transport, this is a disincentive to sustainable transport choices, increasing traffic in the area and limiting people's ability to move beyond the 'honeypot' sites.

While there are tourism businesses in Charnwood, there is a need to grow the tourism economy and an opportunity to increase its sustainability. With greater collaboration and coordination, the CFRP and local

businesses could: grow and diversify the tourism offer; cross promote attractions and businesses through shared place-based branding; increase and improve accommodation to support overnight and short stay visits; and support initiatives which encourage visitors to give back to the landscape they enjoy.

All of this would be supported by a year-round, high quality visitor experience which, while not significantly increasing the number of visitors, would even out peaks and troughs of visitor numbers that lead to overcrowding for some and total neglect for others.

The range of heritage interests lends itself to a varied programme of skills training which supports their future protection and management. Stone walling skills, in particular, are in short supply in the area.

Many partners already provide volunteering activities, but these are organised separately and opportunities exist to create a more coordinated and cohesive offer for those wishing to volunteer. There is a need to reach out to fledgling community groups and build their capacity. In both cases volunteers and members are ageing and there is a real need to create more flexible, modern programmes, capable of attracting new volunteers and supporters.

3c Why is it essential for the project to go ahead now?

Given the lack of widespread understanding of the heritage interest within Charnwood, there is a danger that heritage is lost because of a lack of proper investment and because it is not made relevant to people and communities. The geoheritage is lost because there is no capacity to protect the internationally important fossils; the natural environment is lost because it is not appreciated and managed; the built heritage is lost because it deteriorates through lack of investment and skills; and the stories of its people are lost because they are not celebrated and retold. Without a clear focus, Charnwood's heritage will be gradually lost by attrition until all that is left is its name.

The CFRP partnership has worked to improve its governance and structure. It has a clear vision for the future of the Regional Park, political support and a committed base of stakeholders. It has created a sense of momentum among partners and stakeholders; but, without action now, we risk this momentum dissipating.

More significantly, at a time of dwindling resources, the ability of partners to provide match-funding towards a project of this scale is threatened. The CFRP overlaps the National Forest but the need to restore damaged landscapes in the Coalfield has drawn much of the focus. The NFC recognised the need for significant intervention in Charnwood. It has only been through the NFC taking a leading role and sharing the costs with the local authorities and with generous support from the Lottery Fund that we have been able to develop this bid. But this might be the last time that partners are able to do so. Partners have been aligning projects to the bid, many of which have time-limited budgets as match. If we are unsuccessful in this bid, these projects will have to be delivered in a piecemeal fashion (or more likely, not at all).

In short, if we are unsuccessful in this bid, there is a real risk that positive momentum is lost, along with secured funding, and that the partnership stagnates due to an inability to deliver change in a challenging financial climate.

3d Why do you need Lottery funding?

The scale of ambition for Charnwood Forest is such that only a significant investment of external funds can trigger the step-change in delivery needed. We have explored other potential funding sources such as Rural Development Programme for England and Local Enterprise Partnership support but these have required levels of job creation that are not appropriate for Charnwood. An LPS is the best option to deliver what we want to achieve. The alternative would be to raise funds for each element of the project which would inevitably result in a piecemeal, disjointed and uncoordinated approach to landscape-scale challenges, which to date has failed to prevent decline. An LPS would provide the boost needed to set Charnwood on a sustainable footing, 'pump priming' local activity and supporting outcomes that are financially, socially and environmentally sustainable. We want the legacy of the Charnwood Forest LPS to be a long-term change in activity and outputs. A significant co-ordinated effort is needed to achieve this. Other parts of the world with similarly important geology are receiving protection: Mistaken Point in Newfoundland is a World Heritage Site and its neighbour, Discovery, has submitted an application for GeoPark status. The Partners share an ambition for Charnwood to be designated as a UNESCO Global GeoPark but considerable investment and work is needed to lay foundations for a successful application.

3e What work and/or consultation have you undertaken to prepare for this project and why?

The bid has been developed on behalf of the Charnwood Forest Regional Park Partnership and partners have been consulted and engaged throughout. The first round application followed an intensive period of consultation and surveys with the wider stakeholder group and involved c.215 interested parties. This generated a prioritised set of projects which were put forward in the first round bid.

The development phase has allowed us to considerably broaden the scope of consultations and to undertake, with the support of external consultants, studies to refine projects, the Scheme as a whole and our approach to engaging the local community. We have undertaken:

- A new Charnwood Forest Landscape Character Assessment to understand the distinctive character of Charnwood and its sensitivities
- Geoheritage Conservation and Interpretation Opportunities Report – to understand the threats to Charnwood's most significant heritage assets and how to mitigate them
- Training and Skills Audit – to identify needs and gaps in provision and understand what is required to support better and more coordinated management of the Forest
- Biodiversity Audit – to assess the state of Charnwood's wildlife and work out where resources could make the biggest difference to habitats and species
- Community Arts Plan – to learn more about our target audiences and how participatory arts could become a vehicle for wider engagement in the future management of Charnwood
- Community Engagement Plan – to learn more about the needs and motivations of our target audiences and to understand how best to reach them and encourage their participation
- Natural Flood Management Scoping Study – to assess water courses and establish how best to improve water quality and mitigate flooding
- Interpretation Audit– to review Charnwood's sites and current interpretation and how we can share Charnwood's geology with people in a way that honours the incredible story we have to tell
- Evaluation Framework and Baseline Report – to work out what outcomes we want to achieve and how to measure whether we have been successful.

More than 80 organisations and at least 865 individuals have supported consultations and project development during the Development Phase. Their involvement has immeasurably improved the bid.

3f How are you planning to promote and acknowledge National Lottery players' contribution to your project through HLF funding?

In all of our public-facing projects and press releases, publications and social media (using #NationalLottery), we will credit and thank National Lottery players for having played their part in supporting our work. We will also fully credit NLHF in all our communications, banners, interpretation, on-line presence etc. according to the guidance.

We will offer reduced price entry, early viewings and other rewards for people carrying a lottery ticket and seek to advertise volunteering opportunities and community grants in newsagents and other venues where lottery tickets are for sale. Each of the detailed project plans explains how we will acknowledge the support of NLHF and lottery players.

Section four: Project outcomes

In this section, tell us about the difference that your project will make for heritage, people and communities.

4a What difference will your project make for heritage?

Better Managed:

- Dedicated geological expertise in the Delivery Team coupled with substantial investment across a number of conservation and interpretation projects will enable appropriate management plans to be created for Charnwood's geoheritage.
- More organisations from more sectors of society, especially from communities within and surrounding the area, will be engaged to provide joined-up management and a coherent 'offer' to the visiting public.
- Habitat management projects will support the management and connectivity of 515ha of SSSI in the three honey-pot sites together with up to 300ha of mature woodland, 50ha of heath grassland and 100ha of unimproved grassland. This will help to halt the decline in species.
- More people will be engaged to actively care for Charnwood's heritage. Volunteer groups, community interest groups will have the confidence, skills and capacity to take on responsibility for their local sites.
- Landowners, farmers, community groups and volunteers will be engaged in looking after Charnwood's heritage
- By supporting the provision of more tourism facilities, marketing local products and enabling visitors to experience more sites, they will stay longer, see more and contribute more to the local tourism economy.
- The CFRP will be better placed to achieve its potential aim of GeoPark designation.

Better condition:

- Priority sites and features will be restored and brought into better condition including habitats, paths, stone walls, fossil sites
- Unrecorded fossil and archaeological sites will be discovered, recorded and protected from destruction
- Distinctive landscape features such as hedgerows and stone walls will be cared for or replaced
- The condition of sites and features in the wider landscape will be improved through grants to communities, farmers and other landowners

Identified and recorded:

- Multiple projects will engage the public in discovering, researching, recording and representing the many aspects of Charnwood's heritage.
- A LiDAR survey will fill gaps in current coverage, identifying new features of archaeological interest. 3 community digs will bring further artefacts to light. The findings will be recorded, interpreted and celebrated using a variety of media and art forms.
- Habitats and species will be better recorded. Species-specific projects e.g. lichen, Charnwood Spider, will add significantly to our understanding of those particular species in the area.
- Citizen Science projects e.g. stone wall recording project, will identify built heritage and record its condition.

4b What difference will your project make for people?

Developed skills:

- More people from a wider diversity of backgrounds will have learnt new skills in heritage restoration techniques and recording.
- People will learn skills such as resolving conflicts of use, action planning with partners and forming, developing and managing community interest/Friends of groups.
- Partners will learn from best practice in other Landscape Partnerships and international links with other areas of geological importance.
- Teachers will have the capacity and skills to engage pupils with outdoor learning and Charnwood's geological and natural heritage

Learnt about heritage:

- People will discover, research, record and celebrate a range of heritage features through art, interpretation and events.
- Businesses and producers will have learnt about Charnwood's heritage and will be actively using it to inspire their work, products and services
- Having accessed Charnwood's heritage features, locals and visitors will have learnt more about a wider range of heritage by experiencing more exciting interpretation, seeing inspiring artwork and attending guided

walks, cycles and events.

- By volunteering, carrying out grant-funded projects and joining Friends of groups, people will learn more about heritage and what is required to protect and restore it.

Volunteered time:

- New and existing volunteers will get involved with a wider range of heritage sites and features. 1,250 volunteers will take part contributing more than £100k of time to the project.
- Voluntary organisations and support groups will have more members, actively helping to look after, record and interpret their local heritage. They will be more skilled and in a better position to apply for grants and recruit and manage volunteers.
- More partner organisations and community representatives will volunteer more time to the management of the area through the CFRP partnership and project management structure.

4c What difference will your project make for communities?

Negative environmental impacts reduced:

- Providing an attractive place to visit for residents of nearby urban areas and communities within the Forest to stay and explore will reduce the amount of leisure travel by car.
- We will address traffic and parking problems by: providing trails and cycle routes from surrounding settlements; investigating opportunities for increased links by public transport; and encouraging those visitors that drive to the area to leave their cars at honeypot sites and explore Charnwood on foot or by bike.
- Natural flood management projects will provide habitat enhancements and cleaner water as well as addressing flood risk downstream.
- Helping to promote local products in local outlets, encouraging greater use of Forest food and cutting food waste will all reduce negative impacts on the environment.

More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage:

- We will engage people from under-represented groups from surrounding urban areas of Leicester, Loughborough and Coalville in researching, understanding and in active protection of heritage sites.
- Accessible transport and trails from gateway sites will provide more opportunities for people to visit and experience Charnwood.
- People's health and wellbeing, including mental health, will be improved by experiencing the natural environment and spending time outdoors through outdoor learning, guided and self-guided walks (including health walks), cycle rides and other active forms of recreation.

A better place to live, work or visit:

- There will be more trails on off-road footpaths and bridleways and more sites open to visit.
- There will be more and higher quality facilities to cater for visitors and sites will have a more welcoming feel.
- Pressures will be relieved by dispersing visitors to other nearby sites.
- The natural environment will be enhanced with more wildlife-rich habitats to enjoy.
- There will be vibrant community groups organising interesting events and celebrations.
- There will be a greater variety of interpretation and arts to engage and inspire people.
- People will know more about why Charnwood is special and residents will feel a greater sense of pride in their area.
- People from the surrounding urban areas will feel welcome in Charnwood Forest and will understand both how it can benefit them and how they can support it
- There will be evidence that people are proud to identify with Charnwood and believe it to be special. It will be clearer that you are in Charnwood Forest and interpretation, regardless of where it appears, will tell a coherent story which links to the wider history of the landscape.
- People participating will feel healthier and happier as a result of the changes they have been encouraged to make through the Scheme.
- It will be possible and realistic for the Charnwood Forest Regional Park to apply for GeoPark status.

4d What are the main groups of people that will benefit from your project?

This part of the form aims to collect the information we need to report on the range of organisations we fund. We will not use this information to assess your application. We encourage you to be as specific as possible about the people your organisation represents.

If your organisation represents the interests of a particular group, such as young people or disabled people, tell us which by filling in the tables below.

If you are based in Northern Ireland, where legislation requires us to report in detail on the organisations we fund, please complete the tables in full, as applicable.

✓ If you are based outside Northern Ireland and your project will benefit a wide range of people and not any particular group, mark this box only

4e Does your project involve heritage that attracts visitors?

Yes

How many visitors did you receive in the last financial year?

750000

How many visitors a year do you expect on completion of your project?

850000

4f How many people will be trained as part of your project, if applicable?

1250

4g How many volunteers do you expect will contribute personally to your project?

1250.

4h How many full-time equivalent posts will you create to deliver your project?

3.5