**Summary Report to the South Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership (SYLNP) on the outputs of the Northern Forest Workshop 1st March 2019**

Nicky Rivers SRWT, Liz Ballard SYLNP

A workshop was organised and hosted by Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust (SRWT) on behalf of the SYLNP. Attendees were invited from the SYLNP Board and wider contacts who were known to be involved or interested in significant past, current or future tree planting activities. Twenty people (plus four organisers/facilitators) attended the workshop from Local Authorities, NGOs, Government Agencies, the private (land-owning) sector and Academia. SRWT have a record of all the participants, including (mostly) who made which comments. However, participants were advised they could speak freely and to take this opportunity to air their views anonymously.

**The Aims of the workshop were**:

* To share information about the Northern Forest proposals
* To help establish who is engaged in tree planting activity in S Yorks and to understand current activity in S Yorks in relation to tree planting, especially community led tree or woodland planting
* To explore the opportunities and risks/challenges of delivering the Northern Forest in S Yorks
* To make recommendations to the SYLNP Board about options for delivery that best meets the needs of the South Yorkshire local environment, community and economy

**Workshop Agenda**

2:00 Refreshments and networking

2:15 Why this workshop? And what is the Northern Forest?

*Liz Ballard, Chair of the South Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership*

2:40 Plans and policies related to tree planting in South Yorkshire Information sharing session

*Nicky Rivers, SRWT Living Landscape Manager*

2:50 Group workshop session 1: Exploring the opportunities, risks and challenges of the Northern Forest in South Yorkshire

*Nicky Rivers, SRWT Living Landscape Manager*

3:30 Group workshop session 2: How could the Northern Forest work in practice for South Yorkshire?

4:00 Feedback from sessions

4:15 What next?

4:25 Close

**Why this workshop?**

At the start of the session, Liz Ballard set out the context and updated on the SYLNP before running through the presentation provided by the Northern Forest team.

**A list of relevant current plans and policies** related to tree planting in South Yorkshire. Although this will not be exhaustive, it should include many of the main relevant documents (including planning policy documents, BAPs and trees and woodlands strategies) and spans the geographic area of South Yorkshire. Please see Appendix 1 for the full list.

**Potential advantages and opportunities**

* Tree planting is generally thought to be a good thing (for the ecosystem services for example) and a strategic landscape-scale approach can be helpful for ambition and enthusiasm
* Especially as creating ecological corridors, green infrastructure (GI), natural flood management (NFM), converting conifer to broadleaf (where appropriate)
* Top level Government dept/agency and political support for tree planting is a good thing
* A unified branding/framework can help and collective advocacy messages go further
* All of which can be a driver for pushing existing plans forward (see list), reviewing existing land management and freeing up land for tree planting
* A means to carry out this type of work in the absence of the SYFP
* Maybe potential opportunities for local enterprise, forestry skills, the economics of managing woodland, research and education - building on the work of the Comm. Forest Partnerships
* Potential funding for tree planting (although there were questions the funding -see later)
* Getting people involved in tree planting is a good thing (more £ than contractor planting)– potential for wider community benefits, such as health and wellbeing benefits – plus PR opportunities
* There were a few site-specific opportunities starting to be highlighted on maps – these can be provide upon request.

**Potential disadvantages and risks**

* Could be greenwash, e.g. to cover tree and woodland loss from development incl. HS2
* Where is the land coming from? Need to use all the available mapping. Some areas are complicated with lots of assets and existing valuable assets e.g. grassland, wetlands and heathlands – this value needs to be recognised (by non-woodland specialists). Lack of opportunities in some area e.g. E Doncaster, Sheffield. Does W Yorks have more opps?
* Right tree in right place is important – not just a number counting exercise
* Needs to be linked to natural processes – not just a number counting exercise.
* Struggling to maintain existing trees and woodlands – can we cope with more?
* Need to be able to maintain trees after they are planted, particularly urban/small woodlands. The economics need to be thought though.
* Will the NF help make the case for natural capital?
* Could there be a conflict of strategies and targets? And views of organisations may not align
* Not a priority for at least one Local Authority (Barnsley) to engage with the project, another Local Authorities (Sheffield) is already ‘ahead of the game’ with their own strategy
* Delivering with the community is not always straight forward
* Some organisations may see it as a means of getting £ in, not for tree planting – should be viewed as a start and finish project
* Potential for conflict caused by different incentives e.g. do you remove a tenant farmer in order to plant trees or work with them to plant trees on the land?
* There may be changes to priorities, including uplands and farming, with Brexit

**In summary:** The response from the workshop participants was mixed. Many were cautiously supportive, finding it easier to start with ‘opportunities’ but some had concerns about ‘greenwash’. Also see questions at the end.

**How could the Northern Forest work in practice for South Yorkshire?**

NOT IN ANY ORDER

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Options for SYLNP to consider**  | **Details** | **Take forward?** |
| The Northern Forest (Woodland Trust) host a PO | Is the NF team open to this option? Would aid quick delivery. SY is a crowded environmental field.  | Explore further (favoured by one grp) |
| Mix of WT, LA’s, Govt agencies, comm groups – Joint Venture agreement | Could be an umbrella delivery group. With specific focus on this project more so than the SYLNP can. Independence? Conflict of interests? Would still need a host organisation | Worth exploring further - could be a steering group? |
| The SYLNP could host a PO | This could kick-start the clout of the SYLNP and lead to other things. Either the SYLNP could become a constituted or one of the Board organisations could host the post. SYFET was discussed but then found to no longer be in existence - had £2.5k available that could support an appropriate proposal.  | Worth exploring further – does SYLNP want to consider this role? Mixture of above? |
| SRWT/YWT could host the PO | Probably under the banner of the SYLNP, but may avoid the need to constitute the LNP | Not suggested by SRWT/YWT! – further discussion needed. |
| The Forestry Commission could host a PO | There should be a distance between the regulator and the delivery agent (except on own land holdings) | No as FC were not very keen on this |
| Resurrect the SYFP or use SYF Env Trust? | Not enough political/LA support for SYFP and SYFET now wound up. | No, but learn from SYFP. |
| The White Rose Forest Partnership could host a PO | In Leeds CR, track-record of delivery. Could have 2 NF POs and cover SY.Already over-stretched? Don’t know SY? | Some participants categorically said ‘No’- so could be divisive.  |
| The Land Trust could host a PO | Not much engagement with partners in this area. Skeleton team. |  |
| Sheffield City Region could host a PO | No engagement on these issues. |  |
| Woodlands.co.uk | Experience of buying and selling woodland. Business model (profit making) unlikely to be suitable |  |

**Questions for the NF team**

1. Funding **–** would this be available for land purchase? For planting? For capital items such as fencing and invasive species control? Could it be used to manage existing assets? Or is it solely for community engagement in tree planting? What is the innovation fund for? E.g. Will there be opportunities for small businesses to benefit from the NF?
2. Will the NF help make the case for natural capital?
3. What is the sustainability model?
4. Can any related activity be branded as the Northern Forest? E.g. existing planned activity? Will partners be recognised in branding?

**Appendix 1**

|  |
| --- |
| **Plans and Policies related to tree planting in South Yorkshire** |
| New Barnsley BAP | Rotherham BAP |
| Barnsley Green Infrastructure Strategy | Rotherham Local Plan |
|  |  |
| Doncaster BAP  | Sheffield Trees & Woodlands Strategy, 100k trees inc. community |
| Doncaster Green Infrastructure Strategy | Sheffield Green Open Space Strategy |
| Doncaster Woods & Trees Policy | Sheffield Flood Risk Management Scheme |
| Doncaster Core and Local Strategies |  |
|  | SLLP Woodland Heart |
| Environment Agency Woodlands For Water, OPB, Mitigation and NFM | Peak District Area infrastructure plans – will evolve into Natural Capital plans |
| Defra Family Area Integrated Plans – Yorkshire | PDNPA Management Plan, |
| Urban Forest Vision (FWAC) | PDNPA BAP |
|  | Sheffield Moors Partnership – National Trust tree planting |
| Integrated Infrastructure Plan - City Region | Eastern Moors masterplan, Clough Wood |
| South Yorkshire Forest Plan 2012 |  |
| South Yorkshire Green Infrastructure Plan | Yorkshire Water tree planting plans (in development) |