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REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES	AGENDA ITEM: 15
DATE OF MEETING:	2 <sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2003	CATEGORY:
REPORT FROM:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	PETER WOOLRICH (EXT. 5700)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	DRAFT CROSS REGIONAL NATIONAL FOREST DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	REF: Policy/Committees/eniron ser02/10/03
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: G

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## 1.0 Recommendations

### 1.1 It is recommended that:

- The draft strategy be approved and commended to EMDA, the Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership and others for implementation.

## 2.0 Purpose of Report

### 2.1 To comment on and agree the contents of the draft Cross Regional National Forest Strategy.

## 3.0 Detail

- 3.1 It has been recognised that there are a range of common issues and opportunities across the National Forest and surrounding area that would benefit from being addressed in a strategic manner at the cross-regional, regional and sub-regional levels. As part of the exit strategy for the former Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfields, and in response to the need to provide guidance for the emerging Sub regional partnerships in both the east and west Midlands, the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA), Advantage West Midlands (AWM) together with District and Borough Councils of East Staffordshire, Hinkley and Bosworth, North West Leicestershire and South Derbyshire, and The National Forest Company have commissioned consultants to prepare this cross regional National Forest Strategy.
- 3.2 Whilst the National Forest provides the common focus, the study area includes the whole of the Districts of East Staffordshire, North West Leicestershire and South Derbyshire and those parts of Litchfield, Charnwood and Hinkley and Bosworth which lie within the National Forest or former coalfield area.
- 3.3 The consultants have undertaken an analysis of existing strategies and interviews with representatives of the major organisations in the study area. The intention is to present the strategy to a workshop later this year before finalising the document.

- 3.4 The attached annexes provide an executive summary (A) together with the section on recommendations and actions (B). A copy of the full draft is available in the Member's Room.

#### Comment

- 3.5 There is a general recognition of the close relationships particularly between the three main districts of East Staffs, North West Leicestershire and South Derbyshire along the line of the A511 and the journey to work patterns that characterise this axis. Based upon the opportunities presented by the National Forest a vision has been suggested from which a limited number of objectives have been defined. The three sectors of Tourism, Environmental Technologies and ICT are identified where the area has a specific competitive advantage and recommendations have then been made at encouraging the development of infrastructure to encourage growth in these sectors.
- 3.6 The recommendations reflect those actions which should be progressed on a cross border basis. These include
- ◆ Transport strategy for the study area as a whole, specifically to address the cross border issues of public transport, a regeneration/development route from the A38 to the A511 Ashby Bypass, cycle networks, locally raised resources for transport purposes.
  - ◆ Extension of the existing collaborative marketing through the 'National Forest and Beyond Initiative'
  - ◆ Stimulation of broadband services
  - ◆ Collaboration of higher and further education providers
  - ◆ Further research to establish market demand and feasibility of establishing innovation centres, incubation facilities and centres of excellence for wood based enterprises including wood fuel processing.
  - ◆ A visioning exercise for the market towns (including Swadlincote)
- 3.7 The recommendations in respect of transport relate in part for the need for joint working on a number of issues across the common boundaries. Members may have particular views in respect of this sensitive issue (please refer to the Agenda item 14 on the West Midlands to East Midlands Multi Modal study) and the balance between the recognised need for a regeneration link between Burton, Swadlincote and Ashby. with the development and environmental pressures this entails. A further issue relates to the District Councils taking the lead particularly as they are not the highway authorities. There will be resource implications for further studies to be undertaken.
- 3.8 There may well be further complications in respect of the development of regional tourism now being undertaken by the RDA's and subsequent branding and operation at a local level. However the 'National Forest and Beyond Initiative' is to be supported as a local branding and marketing initiative.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There will be resource implications for further studies to be undertaken.

## 5.0 **Conclusions**

- 5.1 Consultants commissioned by the Regional Development Agencies, The National Forest Company and the key District Councils within the National Forest Area have prepared a draft strategy and action plan to co-ordinate cross boundary working. Subject to amendments following this exercise it is hoped to have a launch later this year. The document's main aim is to influence the Sub Regional Partnership plans and to effect close cross border working on these common issues.

