

## ROSLISTON FORESTRY CENTRE

### Vision 2017-2027

#### Introduction

South Derbyshire District Council and the Forestry Commission, the joint owners of Rosliston Forestry Centre, have a strong partnership, nurtured over 20 years. The current site management agreement is nearing completion, providing the partnership with the opportunity to develop a new vision for the centre. The long term future of the site will be influenced by the aims and goals of both organisations. The new Vision will re-energise and re-vitalise the site and secure its ongoing success as a key attraction within the National Forest.

Rosliston Forestry Centre (RFC) was the first community woodland planted in the National Forest, in 1994. Now it is a mature site, holding a different perspective on the landscape, and it is pertinent timing to revisit the future provision of the site for its visitors. A modern and relevant offer is required to move the site into the next stage of its development, based on its previous successful 20 plus years. The partner organisations, themselves, have undergone changes and these are reflected in the new Vision and accommodate their values and positions.

The Vision will inform the strategic direction for the partners to build on, and help choose a management structure for the Centre from April 2018. It will also support the Soft Market Testing event, whereby prospective management companies can put forward their thoughts and ideas for the site. Following this event an Options Appraisal will be developed, which will outline all the various options for the centre, from which one preferred option will be followed. Therefore the impact of the future vision is critical in the process the partners have to follow over the next year.

#### Vision

**The Centre should provide a warm and welcoming outdoor experience for its visitors, delivering a range of activities and space for all to enjoy. The Vision will be the means to bring a new outlook for both partners for their continued support and involvement for Rosliston Forestry Centre.**

The ethos of Rosliston Forestry Centre has been to provide a pleasurable outdoor experience for all visitors, with little cost attached to it. Bringing people to appreciate the site as a whole or to participate in the activities provided has been integral to its success. Looking into the future, establishing a sustainable business is the key element for the Vision. The social aspect of the provision will remain, but the financial aspect of the centre has to be sustainable in the long term, as both partners become more constrained with their financial situations, looking at a financially sustainable business is critical.

Adding value to the partners' key objectives of People, Nature and Economy (Forestry Commission) and People, Place and Prosperity (South Derbyshire District Council) will be a significant driver taking the new management of the site forward. Creating a place that visitors want to return to time again, providing a fresh but relevant offer encouraging repeat visits to the centre.

Rosliston Forestry Centre has a lot to offer already and it's essential that we take the opportunity currently provided to look at its future provisions and redefine activities to strengthen the offer. Recreation, health, and education have played an important part of the Centre over the past 20 years, encouraging participation in a wide variety of activities for all levels. These will be taken into account and consideration given as part of the options appraisal.

Rosliston Forestry Centre like all tourist attractions is affected by external economic and social factors, though its natural and physical environment is a large component of the site's unique offer, which will continue to change as it literally develops and grows. Woodland management, site management, activities management will provide more challenges in the future as the dynamics of the site alter on a seasonal basis.

The site is an important one within the National Forest, often referred to as 'the jewel in the crown of South Derbyshire'. It is a unique site for the Forestry Commission portfolio, being a partnership with a district council and the commercial aspects managed by a third party. The organisation would like it to be an exemplar site, demonstrating multi-purpose woodland management and the sustainable delivery of social, economic and environmental benefits.

South Derbyshire District Council continues to see the Centre as a visitor attraction and community hub that as a major leisure facility provides high quality experiences and opportunities for local people and visitors alike.

Both **South Derbyshire District Council** and the **Forestry Commission** continue to have high aspirations for the centre, balancing community/visitor needs and with the aim of achieving a sustainable economic business.

### **Site Development**

From being the first community forest within the National Forest, its initial uniqueness has to be re-evaluated as it is now one of a number of tourist attractions within the area, vying for the same visitor base. The partners, stakeholders and future site operators must consider the points of difference available to the Centre in the future.

Over the next few months, we will further clarify our Vision, aims and objectives for Rosliston.

This will help us to define key site developments required. The section below summarises our initial thoughts on site development.

The creation of warm welcoming features as a first impression for visitors is essential. External highways and on site signage needs to be clear and informative for the visitors; therefore the partners will be looking at rebranding and new signage for the future, when the new management of the site is determined for 2018.

A master planning exercise for the site is being undertaken which will look at the physical aspects of the site and how it can be developed to enable future developments to take place within the spatial constraints. The size of the site is a major factor and the best utilisation of the space will be looked at by the partners in order to create a plan to take the site forward for the next ten years at least. An important aspect of this will be to retain the advantage Rosliston already has in attracting

## Annexe No.1

disabled and family visits due to its fully accessible pathways, inclusive play equipment and reputation as a 'user friendly' venue.

The main entrance to Rosliston Forestry Centre has to be enhanced to ensure that it creates a visible friendly welcome, clearly defined way in and exit. Thus bringing returning visitors but also new people who may just be passing and become attracted to find out what the site offers them.

The buildings within the Visitor Centre similarly require updating and redesigning to take the site forward for the next ten years. Looking at their purpose and determining future use with the new management will provide the basis of re-evaluation.

The entrance to the Glade has to be redefined in partnership with the 3<sup>rd</sup> party wedding leaseholder. The separation from the main site, accentuating it being the venue and wedding area, is essential for visitors to the Glade to be directed towards a new entrance and not the main Forestry Centre.

The car park is currently shared with the Centre and the Glade and little definition between the areas. The car park has recently been resurfaced but a full landscape design would be beneficial to the visitors. The carpark redevelopment is a priority for the future of the Centre.

The play areas are an essential part of the offer at Rosliston, these too need upgrading and revitalised.

The future of the log cabins will be included in discussions, between the partners and interested parties, along with all amenities and activities currently provided on the site.

### **Summary**

Working together to develop a new vision, aims and objectives is a major factor for Rosliston Forestry Centre's future planning and development. This must reflect the aspirations and commitment of both partners, whilst taking into account the continuing interest of key stakeholders. Retaining its position as a much loved venue for the community to use for a range of activities is important. Increasing its visitor base and creating a sustainable business is at the heart of the vision.

The Council and Forestry Commission both value this longstanding partnership and building on the last 20 plus years is a priority for both.