

Biosphere Reserve Arts Council Project Proposal : THE FOREST WE WANT

Two artist commission opportunities to engage district community in the concept of Forest of Dean Biosphere Reserve

Summary:

BRAG wish to commission 1 lens-based and 1 audio-based artist to engage the Forest of Dean (FoD) community in a creative interpretation of landscape & place through story, film, photography & digital media, through accessing an Arts Council grant of £10,900.

Aims:

- to increase public understanding of the benefits of FoD gaining designation as a Biosphere Reserve (BR) through UNESCO;
- to commission 2 artists to engage FoD communities in a creative interpretation of landscape & place through film, audio content, photography & digital media;
- to garner community responses and sentiment in response to the potential of a BR designation;
- to prepare for a wider Biosphere Reserve nomination application for the Forest of Dean with UNESCO.

Objectives:

- to stimulate discussion about the potential of BR designation for the area through lens-based media online/offline
- to engage the collective imaginations of the resident population of FoD through artistic processes
- to galvanise a sense of place, community, culture and nature to secure a long-term, economically viable future, for FoD and its bio-economy.

Why: We believe that the possibility of gaining designation as a Biosphere Reserve could be a fantastic opportunity for the area, which would galvanising the community around progressing and developing a sustainable district scale bio-economy, while promoting Forest of Dean districts unique natural qualities. These efforts will contribute to ensuring that the economy benefits from green and cultural tourism, and the wise use of human and natural resources to underpin our strong cultural offer and identity. To progress to a Biosphere Reserve nomination with UNESCO, we must demonstrate evidence of community support, which this project hopes to achieve and capture.

A biosphere provides solutions for sustainable use where sustainable development is defined as: “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” FEP has an overriding objective to ensure a balance between future economic development without throwing away the natural environment currently enjoyed in the District and also to futureproof that development against issues such as climatic change. This definition is therefore a suitable one to explore.

What Is A Biosphere Reserve? BRs are areas comprising terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems, with a key aim of seeking to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. They are sites of excellence for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems. They “inspire a positive future by connecting people and nature today”.

Issues Identified and Addressed

The project relates to issues raised in the agreed FEP SWOT:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural beauty• Geographical location• Ecologically diverse• Attractive environment for children/families• Range of outdoor activities available• Diverse businesses• Tourism• Forestry Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transport & infrastructure• Division between main settlements• Areas that ‘drop off’ planning radar (border areas such as Tidenham)• Sports/recreational facilities decreasing• Lack of variety of different types of business premises• Resistance to change/growth/development

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private land ownership • Strong cultural connection and pride • Strong local communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insular communities/thinking inside the box • Ingrained lack of aspiration • External perception of FoD
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge Toll abolished – people can live here for less, easier place for people to do business • Space for large developments • Natural resources to mitigate against climate change • Renewable energy potential/Tidal power • FoD has renewable resources to meet 186% of energy needs • Eco-tourism • Making the FoD a centre of excellence for Forestry/Forest products – fuel, construction • FEP – sharing good practice/joined-up thinking/improved cross border relationships • Commercial relocation/inward investment opportunities • New mixed economy work-life balance achievable with new digital technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge toll abolished – pushing house prices up, more people commute outside of District, greater congestion in Chepstow • Too much development could destroy USP • Major businesses leaving the area • Lack of one dominant town/centre can inhibit external investment • Danger of not addressing issues of poor communication links, • inward-looking mentality, lack of investment in FoD • Young people leaving/more attractive lifestyles for young people outside of the Forest • Rising water levels and temperatures due to climate change • COVID-19 restrictions on meeting

SMART Aims

To raise the understanding of the Biosphere Reserve concept among those who live, work, play and study in the District of the Forest of Dean. The anticipated outputs of this project starting in January include:

1. Creation of 2 new works of art in film/audio formats by April 2021
2. Share those works through FEP's and partner organisations web-based sites and links from interested organisations and through non-virtual events where possible. April to June+2021
3. Engage with a wide cross-section of the population so specific campaigns for a wide demographic of local people including the young and the old, and those who do not rely on the internet for information.

Project Engagement Targets:

- 5% of the population exposed to the BR concept. (Estimated 4,325 individuals will view the works on-line or in person April- end of June 2021). This will be evidenced by website diagnostics of views/ clicks and a head count of attendance to events (if possible).
- A further approx. 10% of this 4,325 will engage with and understand the concept. (Estimated 430 individuals evidenced by views, shares and comments and by responses to simple polls from April-June 2021).
- Of these approximately 1% of those who understand, will engage further. (Estimated. 30-50 individuals share the links to others with comment, click on links to more info from the FoD Biosphere Reserve working group).
- These 30-50 individuals will take part in further deliberations, activities and forums towards the BR concept (beyond the scope of this project, post July 2021).
- Delivery of a publishable summary report on the support and impact on potential for a Biosphere Reserve, based on independent evaluation of the engagement processes. July 2021

Proposed Project budget

INCOME

Source	Items	Amount
Forest Economic Partnership	Project administration	£2,308
Forest of Dean District Council (via Publica)	Stakeholder consultation Communications support Independent evaluation	£555 £555 £2000
Arts Council request	Contractors and materials	£10,900

EXPENSES

Budget item	Details	Amount	In Kind	Grant request
Project administration	Officer time estimated at 1 day per week (7.4hrs) x 26 weeks (6 month period), to undertake the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contract management - Finance/ budget tracking - Managing meetings/ agendas - Posting on FEP social media (approx. 500-600 existing followers on facebook and twitter) - Email out to over 200 FEP members - Develop and manage an online survey (to link to all project social media posts) - Manage newspaper/ print advertising - Evaluate web diagnostics and collate survey responses into a report format. - Manage webpages on FEP website dedicated to the project 	£2,308	£2,308	
Project communications	Officer time estimated at 1 week (37 hrs) over the 6 month project period, to undertake the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advise on engagement design; - Advertise the tender; - Promote artists once recruited; - Promote arts product once completed. 	£555	£555	
Stakeholder consultation	Officer time estimated at 1 week (37 hrs) over the 6 month project period, to coordinate and conduct semi-structured phone survey to key stakeholder organisations to complement community engagement outcomes achieved through Arts project.	£555	£555	
Independent evaluator	Independent consultant to advise on engagement design and evaluate stakeholder and community outcomes, as the basis for determining whether there is broad support (or not) for pursuing a Forest of Dean district Biosphere Reserve. Fixed fee based on brief	£2,000	£2,000	
Artists commissions	Engage two freelance artists to deliver video and	£6,000		£6,000

	audio product to engage Forest of Dean district community in concept of a Biosphere Reserve. Fixed fee based on brief, to include all aspects of production & presentation			
Curator/ Producer	Manage artist brief/ tender process and support artists to get desired effect and key messages. 10day @ £150pd	£1,500		£1,500
Engagement Coordinator	Ensure that video and audio products reach local audiences via suitable platforms for delivery. Covid-dependant – to include online/offline. 10days @ £100 pd	£1,000		£1,000
Graphic designer	Develop common brand and graphic treatment of video product and webpage.	£1,000		£1,000
Marketing budget	TV/Radio and social media boosts and advertising	£500		£500
Licences, insurance, Materials	USB sticks/ postage/software/insurance	£500		£500
Print budget	Printing	£400		£400
TOTAL		£18,626	£7,726	£10,900