

Comms & Engagement Working Group

27th January 2026, 15:00-16:00, Room 313 & MS Teams

Attendees:	Cllr Jo Asher (JA), John Bristow (JB), Rebecca Oakley (RO), Roxsan Keilty (RK), Rachel Butler (RB), Ben Brown (BB), Danny Smith (DS).
Apologies:	Cat Hartley (CH), Becky Nixion (BN).
Agenda:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Previous Minutes and Actions 2. Update from Partner Steering Group 3. Project Update 4. NLHF update 5. Working group membership 6. Upcoming comms & engagement activities 7. Any Other Business

1. Previous minutes and Actions:

Minutes of the previous meeting were circulated. RO asked for an amendment to make it clear that the 'Visit Harborough' webpage could be used as a template for a rewilding webpage, not to host the content itself.

With this amendment, the minutes were approved.

DECISION (CE D003) - Minutes of 15/12/25 Comms & Engagement WG were approved.

Communications & Engagement WG actions were reviewed, noting:

- CE A001 (Action) – This will be taken forward with the master planning consultants when appointed to look at what is possible on the land.
- CE A002 (Action) - This is in progress as JB is working to find appropriate images and ensure proper credit for them.

2. Update from Partner Steering Group

DS presented the relevant outcomes of the Partner Steering Group. The WG noted the update, including the decision that volunteering functions would be managed by the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust (PSG D003). The PSG also made a delegation to the WG to organise a visitor day to the rewilding site (DEL 001) which would be discussed in this meeting.

3. Project Update:

DS gave an update on the project status.

In the last reporting period, the first tree planting was held which was highly successful. We have also made strides in progressing our draft NLHF bid.

In the next reporting period, we are expecting to get in our Project Enquiry into the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). We are also expecting to start communicating more regularly with the volunteers who have signed up to the mailing list. This will include the opportunity to volunteer at the James Adler Nature Reserve tree planting.

4. NLHF initial bid update

JB provided an update on the progress of the draft documentation he has been preparing with support from Sam Valman (EMRT Welland Project Manager) to look at costs for specific river interventions.

JA enquired about the timelines for the NLHF decisions. JB advised that the turnaround for comments on a project enquiry are 10 working days. He then advised that the wait time for a decision on the bid (£250k) is 6 weeks. RO noted that currently £65k has been provisionally allocated in the proposed budget for a part time role to support with communications & engagement. She asked what level the post was proposed and if the funding included on costs? JB advised the role has been envisioned for a couple of days a week but at this stage the application was still extremely high level. The role would be for 18 months with the potential for an extension in the larger NLHF bid planned. He did also clarify that the £65k was also to include some constant costs to support with development of a comms & engagement plan and brand development.

RO advised that there was a 0.5 post to support major projects, which would include the rewilding project, in the council's budget proposals which are subject to Council approval. JB questioned what the nature would be of this role. RO advised that it would be more of a communications-based role rather than getting involved with volunteer management which is what separates the two proposed roles. BB suggested both proposed roles should be included in the project's roles & responsibilities matrix to ensure they are well defined.

ACTION (CE A003) - DS to include both proposed roles on the project's roles & responsibilities matrix.

5. Working Group Membership

DS discussed the current invitee list and asked if there are any gaps, suggesting we could extend an invite to the key partners outlined in the MoU. JA agreed with the recommendations. JB advised that this help secure consistency across the partners with regards to messaging. He continued that we have been receiving several enquiries about the project so it would be good to establish some shared comms to share when requested. RB suggested we create a short update on the progress and then we share it with the WG.

DECISION (CE D003) - To extend an invite to all partners who have signed the MoU.

ACTION (CE A004) - DS send an invite to the next meeting to every organisation in the MoU.

ACTION (CE A005) - JB/RB to create a ½ page update on the progress to share with the WG.

6. Upcoming comms & engagement activities

JB advised the upcoming opportunities would be guided walks as delegated by PSG, Master Planning engagement and tree planting at James Adler Nature Reserve. He asked how we advertise the walks to ensure manageable uptake. It was agreed the best route of action would be to initially advertise it to signed up volunteers; and then open it up wider after. RB also advised that EMRT will have town park volunteer days shortly; and these could also include a presentation at the HDC Offices as a part of the day. JA also suggested we investigate using the coffee van when we have volunteers on site.

JB and RB opened a discussion about the branding for the project and how we give all the sub projects the same identify under a banner. It was noted that this would feature as part of the NLHF bid and it was important to get support in creating an appropriate brand to bring all the partners work under one

banner. BO advised in the importance of understanding the delivery objectives for the brand to be relevant and appropriate for the project it represents.

7. Any Other Business:

No AOB were raised.

Date of next meeting: TBC

Summary of Actions and Decisions:

Actions				
Ref	Date Open	Action	Owner	Due Date
CE A003	27/01/26	Include both proposed roles on the project's roles & responsibilities matrix.	DS	28/02/26
CE A004	27/01/26	Send an invite to the next meeting to every organisation in the MoU.	DS	07/02/26
CE A005	27/01/26	Create a ½ page update on the progress to share with the WG.	RB/JB	16/02/26

Decisions		
Ref	Date	Decision
CE D003	27/01/26	Minutes of 15/12/25 Comms & Engagement WG were approved.
CE D004	27/01/26	To extend an invite to all partners who have signed the MoU.