

Sherwood Regional Park Feasibility Study

Briefing Report on Stage One Framework for Discussion

1 Executive Summary

This report is a summary of the findings of Stage One of the Feasibility Study into the establishment of a Regional Park in the Sherwood area, describing the framework for further discussion which has been agreed by the Project Management Board.

2 Study Objectives and Timetable

The overall objectives of the Regional Park Feasibility Study are to:

1. Examine the policy framework, baseline data, studies, information and organisational structures in the Sherwood area and identify the key issues.
2. Identify and assess challenges and opportunities for achieving the partnership vision and objectives.
3. Define a consensual partnership vision with core aims and objectives.
4. Identify options for governing and delivering the vision and objectives.
5. Develop and evaluate the delivery and governance options.
6. Identify a preferred governance and delivery option for taking forward with partners.
7. Formulate an indicative action plan for the preferred option that identifies and timetables its stages of development.

3 Why a Regional Park for Sherwood?

3.1 Regional Park Approach

By their nature Regional Parks are diverse with a range of objectives and visions. The key common denominator is that they are organised to achieve and/or facilitate specific objectives within a spatial framework. In most cases they are driven by objectives and tend to develop a vision based on these desired objectives. In the River Nene Regional Park the focus is on resource protection, in other cases, e.g. Mersey Waterfront, the focus is on regeneration stimulated by environmental improvement and leisure.

Common elements of Regional Park visions include the following:

- Working with partners to promote connectivity and cooperation,
- Capitalising on a unique sense of place,
- Consistency in approach across the region,
- Interconnectivity,
- Enhanced visitor economy,
- Improved branding and identity,
- Improved quality of life and sense of purpose,
- Regeneration and economic development, and
- Increasing economic competitiveness.

3.2 Costs and Benefits of a Regional Park in Sherwood

Experience from established Regional Parks has identified the following potential costs and benefits, which relate to four broad areas/targets, i.e. governance, economics, environment and community:

Target/Issue	Potential Costs	Potential Benefits
Governance and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising of expectation beyond what is achievable • Bureaucracy • Just a talk shop – which fails to deliver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic overview • Leverage of funding • Increased local people engagement in environment • Improved identity and purpose • Efficiency and effectiveness
Economic development and regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration and environmental conflicts • Diversion of resources from existing projects (lack of Additionality) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic benefits to region – Additionality and multiplier effects • Strategic use of available resources
Environmental protection and enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visitor number and increased pressure on environment • Conflicts with economic regeneration objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved environment to live and work in – potentially more attractive to businesses/individuals • Enhanced environment
Community enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict between communities within and outside a Regional park – favouring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved sense of place • Improved sense of purpose • Health agenda benefits

3.3 Potential Additionality of a Sherwood Regional Park

Experience from established regional parks has shown the following types of added value can be achieved by using a Regional Park approach:

- A strategic overview,
- Leverage of funds,
- Local economic benefits,
- Benefits to both the park and surrounding environments,
- Achievement of regional and national objectives/targets,
- Regeneration,
- Environmental restoration,
- Wider social benefits including health,
- Visitor economy benefits, and
- Co-ordination and consistency.

4 Sherwood Forest Regional Park Concept

4.1 Framework for a Sherwood Forest Regional Park

Consultation with existing regional parks has identified the following key success factors for developing a Regional Park:

- Clear Identity,
- Continuation and Enhancement of Previous Plans/Visions,
- Co-ordination of Activity Across Boundaries and Local Authorities, stakeholders and voluntary groups
- Provision of a Framework for Better Leverage of Funding, and
- Facilitation of Social, Environment and Economic Benefits.

4.2 The Name

Experience of other regional parks shows the importance of a recognisable regional park identity/brand. In this case Sherwood Forest is an already established brand and identity with positive perception for visitors and locals. Whilst recognising the possible issues relating to the term forest and its perception, the Project Management Board has accepted that, to build on an established brand, the name Sherwood Forest be used. It is proposed that the Regional Park is known as:

Sherwood Forest Regional Park

4.3 The Vision

The following working vision has been agreed by the Project Management Board:

A future for the Sherwood Region where community based projects, economic re-generation and environmental enhancement thrive together in this inspiring natural setting.

The proposed vision builds on the vision for the Big Lottery vision and incorporates relevant elements from other UK Regional Parks.

4.4 Core Objectives

The Project Management Board has agreed the following underlying foundation for the objectives of a Sherwood Forest Regional Park:

- Economic, social and environmental regeneration;
- Recreating the Sherwood Forest environment;
- Creating a sense of pride and place, local community improvements and a new air of optimism;
- Enhanced access for visitors and residents.

From the above foundations the following seven key objectives have been agreed or proposed for each of the key areas of work:

- **Community Empowerment (Sustainable Communities)**
To facilitate community awareness, empowerment, understanding and well-being, and create opportunities for sustainable and healthy lifestyles.
- **Cultural Heritage**
To conserve and celebrate the cultural heritage of the region and encourage appropriate uses.
- **Economic Development and Regeneration**
To encourage economic development and regeneration that will benefit local communities and respect the environment.
- **Image, Identity and Profile**
To strengthen Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood as an iconic brand and identity for both visitors and locals.
- **Natural Habitats and Landscape**
To conserve and enhance the nature and landscape of the region.
- **Recreation**
To encourage recreation which respects the environment of the region.
- **Visitor Economy**
To facilitate the development of Sherwood Forest as a visitor destination whilst respecting the environment.

5 Outputs and Objectives of a Sherwood Forest Regional Park

The mapping exercise also considers how a Sherwood Forest Regional Park could contribute towards regional and national objectives and targets and to obtaining funding from Regional and National Sources (see diagram overleaf).

6 Governance

6.1 The Principles Underlying All Regional Park Governance & Organisation are:

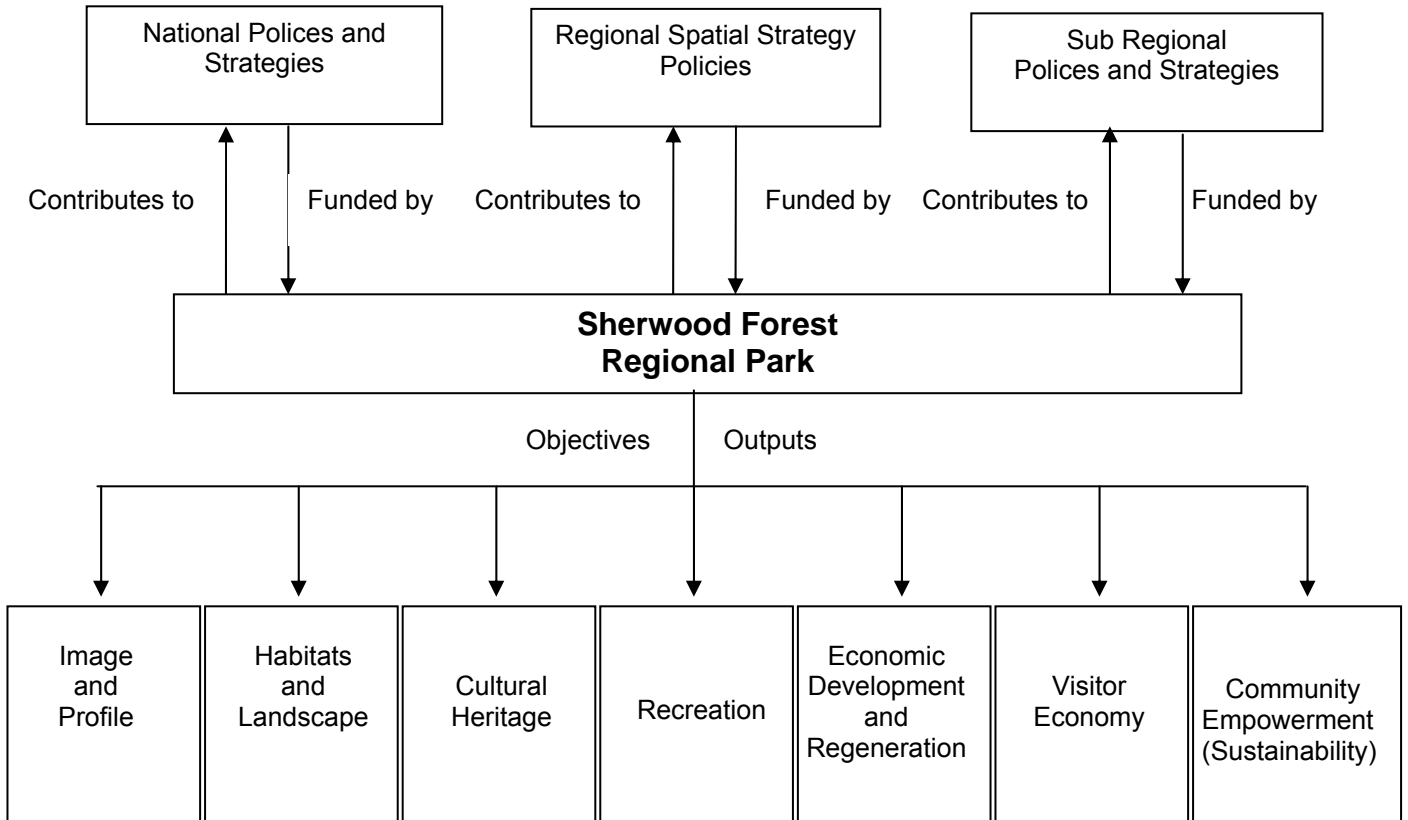
- The need for an Accountable Body, through which to move public and other money and with which to assure the private sector;
- A body which can develop appropriate partnerships - don't let everyone in, though be prepared to listen; and
- A level of independency which gives necessary flexibility and freedom.

6.2 Governance Options for a Sherwood Forest Regional Park

The Project Management Board agreed that the following options are potential governance models for a Sherwood Forest Regional Park and therefore worthy of further investigation:

- 1 Local Authority controlled;
- 2 Partnerships involving as core team drawn from public, private and voluntary sectors; and
- 3 Private/independent companies.

Table: Outputs and Objectives



Following consultation with existing Regional Parks and analysis of existing governance models the following benefits and costs of the above broad governance types have been identified:

Governance model	Advantages	Disadvantages
Local Authority controlled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political accountability • Financial accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially bureaucratic • Perceived lack of independence • Seen as a potential threat by some stakeholders
Partnerships involving as core team drawn from public, private and voluntary sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy in from stakeholder groups • Accountability to a range of stakeholders • Drawing on a broader range of experience • Potentially accessing the dynamism of the private sector • Greater perceived independence and flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially too large and unwieldy
Private/independent companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to respond rapidly to emerging issues • Potentially accessing the dynamism of the private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private companies may be perceived to be furthering their own ends • Problems of access to some funding streams • Less accountable?

6.3 Governance Principles for a Sherwood Forest Regional Park

The Project Management Board has agreed that the key role of a Governance Body for a Sherwood Forest Regional Park would be as a facilitator for the overall regional park strategy and as a facilitator for the regional park objectives and outputs.

The Project Management Board has agreed that the preferred governance model based on the above premise is a public (quasi public)/private partnership, and that further investigations should be made into governance based on a community interest company or by a quasi public organisation (executive board). Consultation is being undertaken with existing regional parks and other appropriate models to develop a more detailed governance model which will feed into the Business Plan.

7 Boundaries

7.1 Objectives

The importance of a clear geographical identity has been noted as a key element in establishing a successful regional park and the Project Management Board agreed that a clear boundary needed to be identified for the proposed Sherwood Forest Regional Park.

7.2 Agreed Boundary Principles

The Project Management Board has agreed that the following principles be used in combination to establish a working boundary for a Sherwood Forest Regional Park:

- The natural area of Sherwood,
- The historic forest boundary,
- The current visual landscape of Sherwood Forest,
- Inclusion of regeneration areas around the rural core of Sherwood Forest,
- Inclusion of settlements with historic linkages to Sherwood Forest,
- Inclusion of key assets, ecological, recreational, historical, visitor etc. and
- Building on previous Sherwood boundaries as used in planning strategies and other strategies, e.g. 1974 and 1988 Sherwood Plans, 2006 Sherwood Vision etc.

Three options have been agreed for further analysis and consultation:

- 1 A small Regional Park based on the Sherwood Forest rural core – building on the 1974 and 1988 plan areas and large enough to contain core assets (i.e. The Heart of the Forest).
- 2 A wide Regional Park boundary based on the rural core but extending west, north and south into bordering urban regeneration areas that lie within the natural Sherwood Character Area and the historic Sherwood Forest area, and
- 3 A combined approach including a core (The Heart of the Forest) with a wider boundary.

7.3 Boundary Options Investigated

The following options have been considered:

- Option 1: A character based approach combining historical evidence, geology and modern natural/countryside character;
- Option 2: Visual perceptions (a landscape approach based on main access points);
- Option 3: An assets based approach involving an audit of key resources, nodes and linkages;
- Option 4: A regeneration approach, and
- Option 5: A core area approach.

A separate Boundary Options Report about the developing of possible boundaries is available on request.

The initial boundaries produced using the above options have been assessed in terms of their effectiveness of meeting the seven objectives of a Sherwood Forest Regional Park, as set out in Section 4.4 i.e. :

- Community Empowerment (Sustainable Communities),
- Cultural Heritage,
- Economic Development and Regeneration,

- Image, Identity and Profile,
- Natural Habitats and Landscape,
- Recreation, and
- Visitor Economy

In the table below, the effectiveness of each boundary option in fulfilling the each objective is graded on a three point scale:

- 0 Fails to fulfil the objective
- √ Partly fulfils the objective
- √√ Fully fulfils the objective

Regional Park Objectives	Boundary Options				
	Option 1 Natural Area	Option 2 Visual Landscape	Option 3 Assets	Option 4 Regeneration	Option 5 Core Area
Community Empowerment (Sustainability)	√	√	√	√√	0
Cultural Heritage	√	√	√√	√√	√
Economic Development and Regeneration	√	√	√	√√	√
Image, Identity and Profile	√	√	√	√	√√
Natural Habitats and Landscape	√√	√	√√	√√	√
Recreation	√√	√√	√√	√√	√
Visitor Economy	√√	√√	√	√	√√

The advantages and disadvantages of each boundary option approach have been summarised in the table below.

The two tables show that no single boundary option approach will fulfil the full range objectives of a Sherwood Forest Regional Park, and that each approach has disadvantages. The Project Management Board has agreed that in determining a boundary for a Sherwood Forest Regional Park a hybrid approach which considers a range of boundary options/factors will need to be used (see Section 7.2).

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
1 Natural Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character Areas are recognised and used by professionals in spatial planning. • Boundary includes urban areas that are in need of (and qualify for) regeneration investment. • Character Area is similar to Sherwood Advisory Group Study area and Living Legend Connected Forest boundary. • Follows the historic boundary of the brand • Historical authenticity and ecological integrity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not necessarily readily recognized by the public as a distinct cohesive area. • Inclusion of non-forest urban areas. • Choice of boundary may exclude regeneration areas in the North of the County. • Parts of the historical forest are now heavily urbanized - possible distorting effect on public perception of Sherwood Forest Regional Park.
2 Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear visual Sherwood Forest identity. • Branding and signage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of urban areas and regeneration areas – impacts on funding. • Road safety issues in using major roads as boundaries.
3 Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds on existing resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear geographical identity. • Exclusion of regeneration areas. • Focus on current tourism and environmental assets, rather than regenerative and potential assets
4 Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added value - regeneration and community benefits. • Financial benefits via regeneration funding. • Extension of the effects of regeneration and community investment aid to a large area of the county, extending the area of expectation, influence and potential positive perception. • Similar to Alternative Search Area boundary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extensive Regional Park covering a large proportion of the county with lack of clear perceived Sherwood Forest identity. • Less historical authenticity than Option 1. • Lack of modern day geographical authenticity
5 Core Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More recognisably a Sherwood Forest area. • An area with relative cohesion. • Historical planning precedent - an administrative pedigree and purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of regeneration areas – implications for funding and added value. • Will not achieve the more wide-reaching geographical, environmental and economic results considered under the working Regional Park objectives.

Footnote: A Working Paper, Boundary Options Report 1, providing more details of boundary options is available on request

8 List of PMB Members

Alliance SSP
Natural England
Natural England
Edwinstowe Parish Council
Experience Nottinghamshire
Forestry Commission
Greenwood Forest Partnership
Groundwork Creswell/ Mansfield & Ashfield
National Trust
Newark and Sherwood Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)

Thoresby Estates
Newark and Sherwood District Council
Notts. Wildlife Trust
Sherwood Forest Trust
Nottinghamshire County Council
Gedling District Council
Notts. County Council
East Midlands Development Agency
Newark and Sherwood District Council

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