

**VISION STATEMENT  
FOR  
SHERWOOD FOREST  
REGIONAL PARK**



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### **SHERWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK**

#### **Introduction**

Sherwood Forest is internationally renowned for the beauty of its landscape, its exceptional biodiversity and its historical importance, with links to royalty and legends. It is inextricably associated with Robin Hood and stands as one of the most iconic landscapes in the world. It is also a working landscape with productive farmland, commercial forestry, thriving communities and a long history of mineral extraction and coal mining.

Sherwood Forest is a major asset for the people of Nottinghamshire, and a significant tourist and visitor destination. Its proximity to the growing urban areas of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester, as well as Sheffield and Doncaster, Newark, Lincoln and Gainsborough provides local people with opportunities for recreation, enjoyment and access to natural greenspace. Sherwood Forest also offers a unique opportunity to raise the profile of Nottinghamshire on the national and international tourist destination map, converting the current trend of day visits to long stay and providing a much needed economic boost to the area.

However, Sherwood Forest is not without its challenges. Habitat fragmentation and decline, landscape degradation and limited water resources threaten the exceptional natural environment, and are all exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. The economic and social legacy from the decline of coal mining, and increasing pressures from growth in nearby urban areas, as well as visitors, require careful management.

A new and coordinated approach to Sherwood Forest is needed to address these challenges and help realise the potential of the area. This is offered by the establishment of a new Regional Park for Sherwood Forest.

#### **The UK Regional Park Concept**

In the UK, Regional Park designation is used to define distinctive and extensive areas where management and spatial planning can bring about regionally significant economic, environmental and social benefits. Regional Parks such as the River Nene, Lea Valley and Mersey Waterfront have helped to drive regeneration through strong partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors. A Regional Park is not a planning designation and is neither a National Park nor Country Park. Individual Regional Parks are unique and develop their own definition and vision

based on their local characteristics, needs and aspiration. This means they can adapt to local circumstances, embrace innovation and entrepreneurship, and engage community support. Importantly, all Regional Parks use environmental enhancement as a foundation for social and economic improvement programmes.

## **A Regional Park for Sherwood Forest**

The creation of a Regional Park for Sherwood Forest has been an aspiration for many years, and a feasibility study was commissioned in 2008 to investigate proposals<sup>1</sup>. The study concluded that a Regional Park would provide significant benefits for the area and should focus on environmental enhancement to encourage sustainable economic and social development. The study suggested a programme of work towards inception, and a Regional Park Board has now been established, comprising the partners below, with a strong partnership to take forward these aspirations. The Vision, Objectives and Boundary have been developed by the Board as a framework for the creation of a Regional Park for Sherwood Forest.

The Regional Park offers a new and inspiring future for Sherwood Forest that celebrates its rich heritage and provides real opportunities for local communities to get actively involved, helping to shape the future of their area. It has the potential to increase investment and drive sustainable economic growth, linked to the aspirations of Local Enterprise Partnerships, to put Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood firmly on the international stage as a world class attraction.

## **Membership of Sherwood Forest Regional Park Board**

Council for the Protection of Rural England  
Edwinstowe Parish Council  
Experience Nottinghamshire  
Forestry Commission  
Gedling Borough Council  
Greenwood Community Forest  
Groundwork  
Natural England  
National Trust  
Newark & Sherwood District Council  
Nottinghamshire County Council  
Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (Chair)  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire  
Sherwood Forest Trust  
Thoresby Estates

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/rpfsreport.pdf>

## **A Vision for Sherwood Forest Regional Park**

***Our vision is a future for the Sherwood Forest area where the outstanding natural and cultural heritage is locally, nationally and internationally recognised – where vibrant communities, economic regeneration and environmental enhancement thrive together in this inspiring natural setting***

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the Regional Park are:

- To manage, enhance and promote the landscape character of the Forest, including its biodiversity and geodiversity.
- To manage, enhance and promote the historic character of the Forest, its settlements, heritage assets and culture, including its industrial heritage.
- To promote sustainable leisure and tourism.
- To support agricultural diversification, woodland and rural economy uses which respect local character.

### **Regional Park Boundary**

The Sherwood Forest Landscape Character Area provides a good boundary for the landscape character of the Forest. This has been overlain with the known boundaries of the historic Forest, as subject to Forest Law, from 1300 and 1609 to provide a combined working boundary which reflects the Regional Park's natural and historic importance. The combined boundary is shown on the attached Figure 1.

The Regional Park boundary will be defined by each local planning authority through its Local Development Framework (LDF). Since the Regional Park is not a planning designation, it is intended for each local planning authority to adopt similar common policies to promote and enhance the Regional Park objectives. In order to maximise potential funding benefits, the definition of the boundary needs to incorporate a degree of flexibility. In addition, the benefits of the Regional Park will reach beyond the boundary to gateway towns and surrounding communities.

### **How we will achieve the vision and objectives**

The vision and objectives will be achieved through positive spatial planning and land management within the Regional Park as follows:

- a) Partners will align their interests and ambitions within the Regional Park to ensure coherent management and targeted actions.

## **Managing, enhancing and promoting the landscape character of the Forest, including its biodiversity and geodiversity**

*We will restore the outstanding natural environment of Sherwood Forest, taking a landscape-scale approach to its conservation and ensuring that its internationally important biodiversity can adapt to the impacts of climate change.*

- b) Sherwood Forest's international biodiversity value will be preserved and enhanced, working with Natural England and other specialist groups.
- c) The landscape character of the Regional Park will be enhanced through appropriate habitat management and creation, particularly where this can be used to assimilate development within the Regional Park and around its fringe, and through appropriate management of its geodiversity assets.
- d) Habitat creation and enhancement will be focussed on Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and prioritised green infrastructure corridors in order to maximise biodiversity benefits and achieve habitat connectivity.

## **Managing, enhancing and promoting the historic character of the Forest, its settlements, heritage assets and culture, including its industrial heritage**

*We will create a landscape where people want to live and work, with communities that are proud of their past, can embrace their heritage, and are able to shape their future.*

- e) LDF policies will be prepared which manage appropriate types of development, ensuring that development is of high quality design and in keeping with its landscape and settlement setting within the Regional Park.
- f) Sherwood Forest's world renowned history and culture will be investigated and promoted, strengthening the links between the communities in and around the Regional Park and their Forest heritage.
- g) The heritage assets of the Forest, including its archaeology, historic buildings and industrial heritage will be safeguarded and, where appropriate, enhanced.

## **Promoting sustainable leisure and tourism**

*We will develop a stunning new Sherwood Forest visitor centre to attract and disperse visitors, and create a string of pearls that comprise a vibrant series of tourism and leisure attractions for the area*

- h) LDF policies will be prepared which manage sustainable leisure and tourism related development within the Sherwood Forest Regional Park, and provide increased opportunities for sustainable access to the attractions the Forest offers.

i) The existing network of accessible green infrastructure within the Forest will be enhanced and expanded to address gaps in the existing network, provide for future need, and promote sensitively managed access within the Forest and from the surrounding area.

j) There will be a co-ordinated approach to the marketing and promotion of the Sherwood Forest Regional Park, with the creation of a distinctive Regional Park brand. Awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the Park's special character will be raised through appropriate interpretation and educational access.

**Supporting agricultural diversification, woodland and rural economy uses which respect local character.**

*We will create thriving and sustainable land use that will grow new business opportunities around the visitor economy and rural diversification, combining heritage skills with new technology*

k) LDF policies will be prepared which promote agricultural diversification and other rural economy uses whilst respecting local character, and particularly those uses which also support the other objectives of the Regional Park.

l) The sustainability of existing woodlands will be secured through policies and support for business activity to bring undermanaged woods back into active and appropriate management such as leisure and tourism, wood products and processing.

m) The Regional Park will continue to be recognised as a working landscape where agriculture, forestry, recreation and tourism are important activities.

**Next Steps**

The establishment and development of the Sherwood Forest Regional Park will be a long term project, building on existing schemes and developing new initiatives and projects. It will involve a broad coalition of partners including communities, landowners, businesses, public and voluntary sector bodies.

A Regional Park Strategy and Action Plans for each objective will be prepared, building on the initial feasibility study, to provide the framework for achieving the vision for the Regional Park. The current Regional Park Board, established on the back of the Living Legend bid for Big Lottery funding, will be developed to ensure representation from all sectors with an interest in achieving the Vision for the Regional Park.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that:

- The strengths of Regional Park status for Sherwood Forest are acknowledged.
- Each organisation formally endorses the Vision, Boundary and Objectives of the Regional Park
- Each organisation promotes the Regional Park concept through its plans and policies.

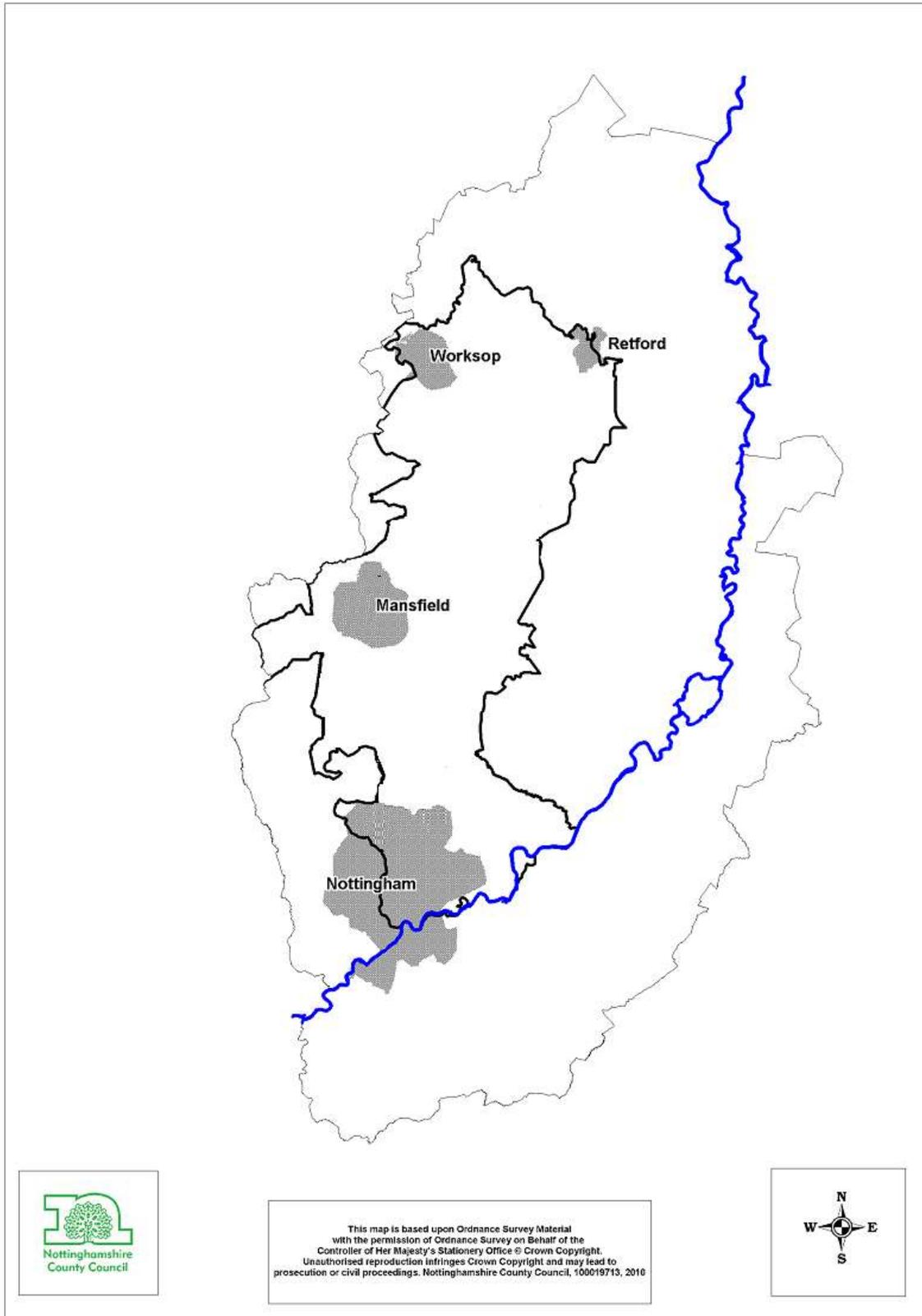


Figure 1: Working boundary for Sherwood Forest Regional Park based on the Sherwood Forest Character Area and the combined historic boundaries of Sherwood Forest (1300 and 1609)