

Marches Forward Strategic Partnership

Overview – Powys CC ERC Scrutiny – September 2023

Recapping objectives

A Marches Strategic Partnership provides a flexible umbrella framework for joint working

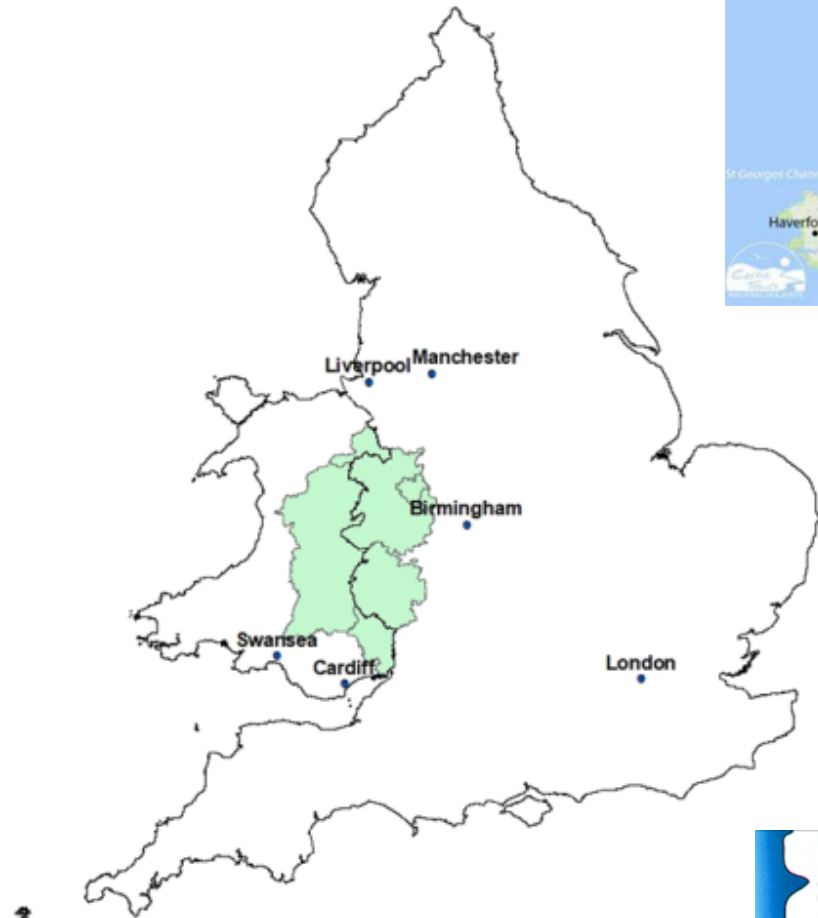
Such an approach supports us in driving the best deal for our geography

It helps us to deliver services that respond to how our area actually functions

It enables us to unlock additional value using our unique cross border location

It provides an open basis for us to collaborate and push the boundaries on what is possible for the area to shape and deliver the best short, medium and long term future

Location of the Combined Area



Our geographical profile

- Local authority areas which are contiguous, straddling 80% of the English/Welsh border.
- Combined character which is predominantly rural in nature.
- Significant cross border / boundary assets eg Offas Dyke, the River Severn Basin (includes Wye) and the Shropshire Hills AONB.
- Shared transport routes eg M54/A5, A49 and Heart of Wales and Cambrian rail lines



Our functional profile

Travel to Work- commuting to the other local authorities within the area accounts for approaching half of all commuting in Shropshire, and and Powys.

Retail- Shared retail centres and access to specialist services.

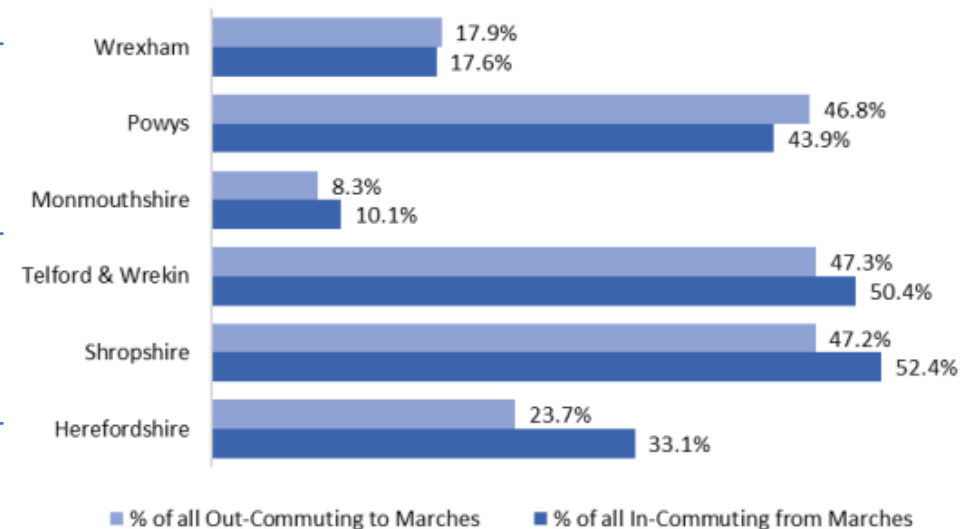
Education - significant cross border movement for education and skill development.

Business Support- use of Marches Growth Hub for Mid Wales business support.

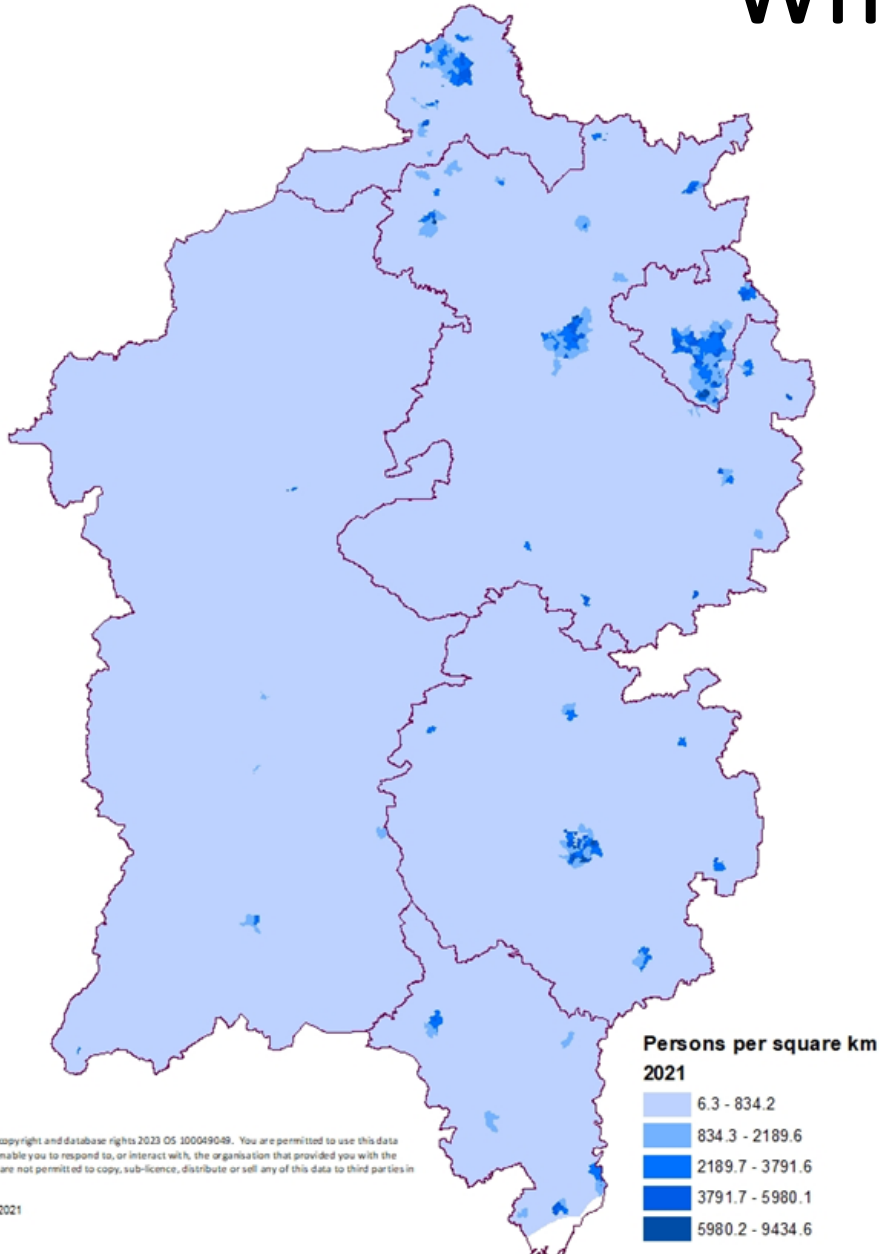
Tourism & Leisure- important cross border nature based and place based tourism activity between England and Wales.

Healthcare pathways for patients – shared acute and specialist health infrastructure and a significant flow of patients to Shrewsbury, Gobowen, Telford and Hereford hospitals)

Proportion of Commuting to Combined Area



What binds us with common purpose?



Rurality (population density 0.9 people per hectare)- **longer and more expensive access to services**

Ageing population (more than 30% of the population 65+ by 2043) – **changing service demands, especially the provision of adult social care, and a squeezing of the available labour force.**

Low levels of productivity (approx. 25% lower than UK average) - **impacted by older population, net out-commuting and the sector mix in the area**

Low employment growth (below national levels by 2031)- **growth is concentrated in a few urban areas but very muted in the more rural areas.**

Costly and challenging connectivity (fewer than 40% of premises in Shropshire, Monmouthshire and Powys can access Gigabit infrastructure) - **infrastructure is more costly and more challenging to deliver.**

Why?

Economic Uncertainty and Untapped Potential

As a collective we:

- Focus on our geography and maximising our potential
- Provide ourselves with the right tools for effective service delivery within each local authority
- Understand and work together to attract the right investment eg for critical infrastructure

A flexible Strategic Partnership

As a collective we:

- Understand and innovate to address the needs of our rural communities
- Harness the value of our shared rural assets
- Align policy and investment drivers to obtain the best from cross border political ambitions

Focus on innovation and resilience

As a collective we:

- Understand future trends and service demands across our functional area
- Focus on where collaboration adds the greatest value
- Share learning and best practice

Memorandum of Understanding

- Representing spirit of co-operation and joint working between the local authorities
- Basis for operating as a collective
 - maximise efficient service delivery
 - attract investment
 - positively impact the area and benefit local communities
- Not constraining individual activities or constituent partnerships
- Not legally binding or involve any formalised governing structure
- Overseen by Strategic Board comprising all Leaders, with rotating Chair
- 18 month review with aim to evolve through implementation and learning

Short Term – Potential Opportunities (less than 12 months)

Shared Priority

Output

Outcome

Immediate Benefits

- Sustainable rural transport network
- Business growth, advice and support programme
- Visitor economy campaigns and key projects
- Housing need and investment
- Climate change and nature recovery

- Alignment of EV fleet
- Scoping potential for area franchising
- Share learning on LTP4 carbon approaches
- Expansion of Growth Hub model
- Expansion of Cool Shropshire and Telford model
- Supply chain engagement and cross border network
- Alignment of involvement to continue cross border projects eg Offa's Dyke, Montgomery Canal
- Joint destination marketing- shared assets/thematic propositions eg food and drink
- Joint design codes/retrofit options Understand infrastructure barriers for delivery of sites in Local Plans
- Cross reference net zero plans
- Scoping joint framework for Biodiversity Net Gain and Carbon insetting
- Align Green Infrastructure resources to provide strategic approach to connecting landscapes and assets.

- Improved rural bus services
- Aligned Transport Plans and Net Zero plans
- Cross border business support offer
- Free business advice on decarbonisation and energy efficiency
- Upskilling to meet business demands
- Enhanced management of major cultural heritage assets
- Aligned cultural and heritage agencies with wider investment opportunities eg agri-environment schemes
- Improved sustainability of housing stock
- Improved housing delivery
- Aligned energy masterplan
- Aligned land management and Local Nature Recovery Strategies

- Move towards coherent, consistent and integrated bus network
- Promotion of sustainable low carbon transport
- Networked business community
- Understanding shared value of cross border visitor and heritage assets
- Shared costs for development of new housing schemes
- Addressing differential standards eg retrofit standards across LPAs
- Joined up conversations with environmental partners/investors

Medium Term – Potential Opportunities (12-36 months)

Shared Priority

- Sustainable rural transport network
- Skill development
- Digital connectivity and transformation
- Visitor economy
- Housing need and investment
- Climate change and nature recovery

Output

- Partnership working on local rail provision
- Cross border integrated ticketing
- Transport corridor assessments and improvement plans eg A49
- Alignment of skills plans in tandem with training providers
- Digital inclusion and connectivity/mobile phone coverage mapping
- Scoping SMART collaboration opportunities
- Alignment of local visitor economy partnerships
- Development of a rural/market town supported housing model
- Cross border housing options strategy
- Develop environmentally focused investment propositions
- Develop area wide climate and nature investment framework

Outcome

- Increased frequency and speed of rail provision
- Coordinated infrastructure proposals aligned to future growth strategies
- Joint skills plan to meet demands and market opportunities
- Collaborative opportunities for cross regional projects.
- Establish Destination Development Partnership for the area
- Long term housing investment plan to provide affordable and other options to balance the housing market
- Establish a Rural Resilience Strategy

Longer Term Impact

- Improved and simplified travel for passengers so borders no longer become a restriction to travel
- Identified 'Cross Border Marches' skills offer
- Targeted improvements for digital and mobile provision
- Coordinated visitor economy engagement to unlock investment
- Improved cross border housing offer
- Opportunities to trade from shared and significant rural economy
- Unique focus and proposition around green growth.

Proposed management and delivery structure

Leaders Group
Political leadership, strategic engagement and communications, *quarterly meetings*

Chief Executive Group
Strategic leadership, oversight and partnership engagement *monthly meetings*

Directors and Officers Group
Drive progress across working groups and manage programme, *monthly meetings*

Data, Evidence & Research Working Group
Joint narrative and intelligence, *officer led data and intelligence group*
functional geography, future projections and scenarios, data gaps and commissioning needs.

Thematic Working Groups
Proposal development, *officer led delivery groups*

Nature, Energy and Climate Adaptation	Transport and Digital Transformation	Health, Housing and Skills	Food, Rural Development and Visitor Economy
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Proposed working arrangements:

- Quarterly Leaders Group meetings
- Monthly Chief Executive and Director Groups meetings
- Joint working groups to take development and delivery forward:
 - *Data, Evidence and Research*
 - *Nature, Energy and Climate Adaptation*
 - *Transport and Digital Transformation*
 - *Health, Housing and Skills*
 - *Food, Rural Development and Visitor Economy*
- MOU as initial basis for joint working, with 18 month review period

Going forward -

- Joint communications plan
- Sharing thoughts and potential benefits with UK and Welsh Governments