



The Future for the Charnwood Forest

Geoff Sansome
East Midlands Regional Director
Natural England

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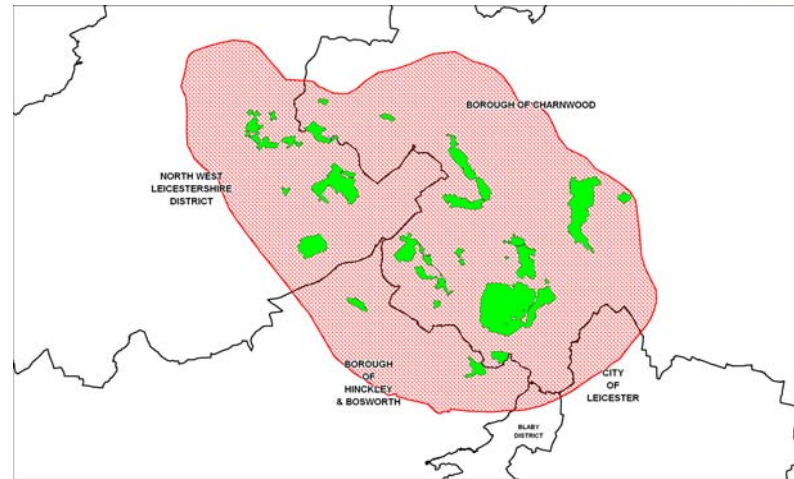
Key characteristics for Charnwood Forest



- Upland landscape rising out of lowland farmland
- Precambrian geology
- A mix of drystone walls, hedges, rough grazing land, woodlands and pastures – relatively little arable
- Extensive open areas such as Bradgate Park, Beacon Hill and Charnwood Lodge
- Villages and farmsteads built from local stone with peripheral larger settlements
- Large reservoirs within an attractive landscape such as Cropston and Swithland



SSSIs in Charnwood Forest



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- **20 Sites of Special Scientific Interest - covering geology, woodland, heathland, old grassland and lakes**
- **Equates to 7.9% of the Character area**
- **For rest of Leicestershire and Rutland, SSSIs cover is equivalent to 1% of the land area**

Significant detractors or threats:



- Large quarries, M1 and intrusive masts
- Non-native species
- Intensification of agriculture and forestry
- Eutrophication of aquatic habitats
- The 3 Cities New Growth Point



Opportunities



- Integrate Charnwood into 3 Cities
New Growth Point Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Using the Green Infrastructure process to establish a new partnership of interested players, with Management Plan and future projects.
- Develop strong links to Local Development Frameworks with specific Landscape Character brief for the area as a baseline.
- Develop specific Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) like recent RTPI award-winning work on Landscape Character in the High Peak.

Recreation and Access



- Develop sustainable recreation and access, with links to Local Access Forums, Rights of Way Improvement Programmes, and Local Transport Plans.
- Some countryside recreation sites are overused, spread the load over more robust sites closer to where people live.
- Other sites are currently in splendid isolation, and will benefit from developing strategic green infrastructure links



- The Agri-Environment Grants that Natural England manage will have their targeting reviewed over the coming months through local consultation.
- This will help to improve the multiple benefits that these schemes can offer in the future in a more effective way.
- Higher Level Stewardship will deliver the management for restoring and maintaining favourable condition on non-woodland Sites.
- It will also help deliver local Biodiversity Action Plan and Species Action Plan targets.

Charnwood Regional Park



- In draft East Midlands Regional Plan proposed Policy for Charnwood Regional Park
- The landscape and concentration of SSSI's together with countryside recreation opportunities should guide location
- Opportunity to conserve best of what is there and "fill in the gaps" with strategic Green Infrastructure Links to enhance the area
- Create an organisation with dedicated staff and resources to promote the area, enhance management and establish strategic linkages
- To be enjoyed by local people, with attractive opportunities for people across the sub region with a wide range of sites and facilities on offer

In conclusion:



- The current roles of Local Authorities with emerging Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships, together with the developing planning system through Local Development Frameworks, provide the opportunity for strong local partnerships that can make a positive and significant difference locally.
- Regional Policies such as the Regional Plan with proposals for a Charnwood Regional Park, and the Regional BAP Strategy provide a new way forward that will benefit the nature, landscape and access assets and opportunities of the area in a more joined up way.

From our Strategic Direction document:



“Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people, and the economic prosperity it brings.”

“Natural England is keen to play an integral part in helping to secure an enhanced and sustainable future for the environment and communities of Charnwood, working in productive partnership with a range of local partners in positive collaboration.”