

Assessment of the potential Geographic Boundaries for a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve centred on the Forest of Dean

A report for Forest of Dean District Council by the Biosphere Foundation CIC



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A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve for the Forest of Dean

Since 2018 the Forest of Dean District Council has been exploring whether a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve designation will be an asset to the area to help it develop sustainably and to give the area a national and international recognition it deserves. This report has been commissioned to explore what the geographic form of the Biosphere Reserve might be as a precursor to wider consultation with stakeholders and the community. The options in this document are not the definitive proposal but provide a basis for

What is a biosphere reserve?

A biosphere reserve is an area that has been recognised for its unique mix of plants and animals, valued environment and sustainable way of life of the people who live and work within this area. Biosphere reserves are designated by the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and rely on local cooperation to ensure the careful management of the resources within biosphere reserves that allow development without harming the area for future generations.

What are the functions of biosphere reserves?

Each biosphere reserve should fulfil three functions that work together and reinforce one another.

A conservation function - to preserve genetic variation, species, ecosystems and landscapes;

A development function - to foster sustainable economic and human development;

A logistic function - to support research, monitoring, education and information exchange related to local, national and global issues of conservation and development.

Is a biosphere reserve similar to those big domes?

No, a biosphere reserve isn't an artificially constructed area. They are real places where people live and work. The local community care for the environment and manage resources in the biosphere reserve that allow stable and sustainable economic growth and development.

What are the benefits of biosphere reserves?

Biosphere reserves provide a framework for projects that improve people's lives and protect the environment in a sustainable way. Communities, local stakeholders and government officials gain an increased awareness of environmental and development issues. Biosphere reserves may attract funding to demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development that can provide lessons to be applied elsewhere. To the locals, the benefits come through the area being a focus for collaboration with any number of bodies and the community to help them develop sustainably and improve quality of life, it can provide a brand for the area that can help businesses access markets more easily.

Who is in charge?

Local communities are integral elements in a biosphere reserve. The communities are key decision makers in how the biosphere reserve is run and governed, ensuring the biosphere reserve meets its

functions and objectives.

What is the difference between a biosphere reserve and a natural World Heritage Site?

- A biosphere reserve is a representative ecological area with three mutually reinforcing functions: conservation, sustainable development and logistic support for scientific research and education.
- Natural World Heritage Sites must have outstanding universal value in accordance with the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972).

How does UNESCO ensure that biosphere reserves function properly?

Biosphere reserves are governed by "soft law". Member States of UNESCO commit to apply the Statutory Framework for Biosphere Reserves and undertake a ten-yearly periodic review process for each biosphere reserve. The MAB national committee in each country ensures biosphere reserves fulfil the criteria and function properly; in the UK this is the UK MAB Committee.

How does an area become a biosphere reserve?

An area needs to have a potential core area that is already highly protected for the long-term, for instance as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It does not have to be a National Nature Reserve. The local community also needs to be willing to become a leader in sustainable development on the world's stage.

Following the identification of the core area, local support can be developed by creating a group or getting the local authority involved in the idea of becoming a biosphere reserve. Consultation with the UK MAB Committee will inform about the area's suitability and ideas for zonation. The UK MAB Committee will be able to advise quite quickly if a designation is likely to get their support or not. If the area does not get immediate support from the UK MAB Committee, they will advise what steps are possible to prepare a more successful application. Once the process is well underway, the Committee can recognise the area as a Candidate Biosphere Reserve.

With support from the UK MAB Committee, the application will be developed by the local community. The application form can be downloaded from the UNESCO website ([link](#)). The application form is technical; it requires a lot of information and evidence of the community working together to get the designation. There will need to be a lot of documented public participation in planning the biosphere reserve. Other crucial evidence includes functional zonation of the biosphere reserve, a management plan and a good organisational structure that is representative and can deliver the management plan for the biosphere reserve.

Throughout this development phase, which can take two to five years, UK MAB will give support on how the project takes shape. Ultimately the application document will need the formal endorsement (with signatures) of relevant stakeholders in the area, the UK MAB Committee, and the approval of the Minister for Defra (and in devolved administrations, the Minister for Environment or equivalent), before being sent by Defra to the UK Permanent Delegation to UNESCO in Paris.

How does UNESCO decide on designating an area a biosphere reserve?

UNESCO undertakes its own review and approvals procedures and makes the final decision. This includes review by a special international advisory committee of experts and then by the Bureau of the MAB Programme and its International Co-ordinating Council (ICC). The approvals process is undertaken only once a year, so deadlines for submissions are important. Dates for submission can be found on the UNESCO website but is usually the end of September in any calendar year.

What makes an area suitable to become a biosphere reserve?

Biosphere reserves are renowned for their exceptional environments and a high diversity of life. Biosphere reserves are areas where the special attributes of the area are considered to be potential assets for the local people and local societies. When an area demonstrates good examples of using and preserving these resources, it may become a biosphere reserve.

Are people allowed to live in a biosphere reserve?

To fulfil the criteria for biosphere reserve, people must live in the area. The concept of sustainable development depends on local support and involvement. The people living in the area are essential to biosphere reserves.

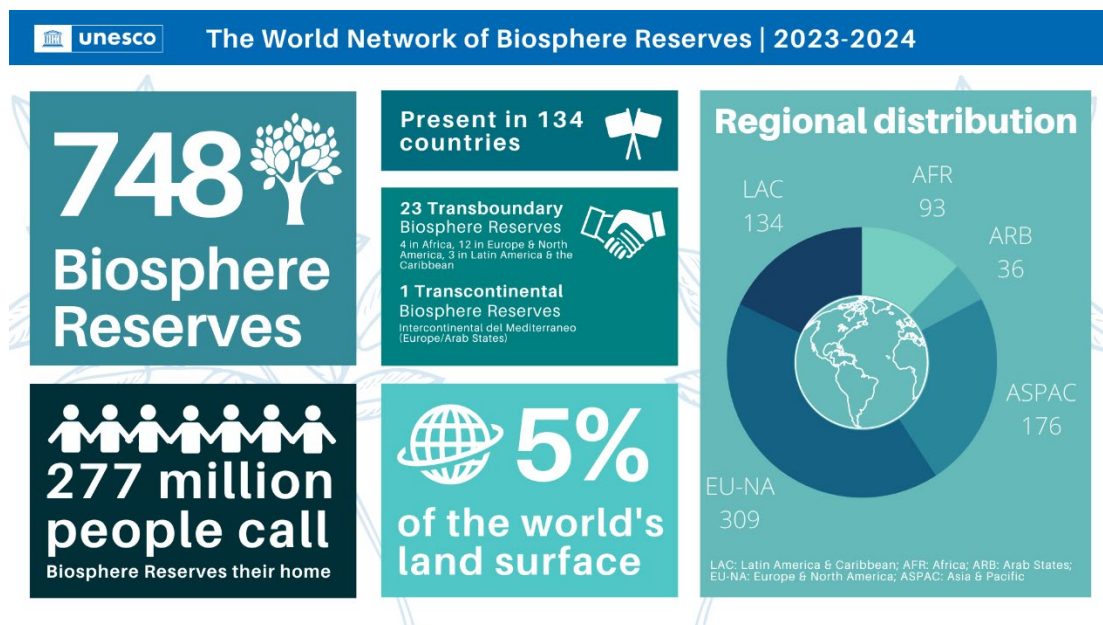


Figure 1 summary of the global status of the Biosphere reserve network

A Biosphere Reserve is designated by UNESCO at the request of member states to be part of the worldwide network of sites under the Man and Biosphere intergovernmental science programme.

They are an international accolade for an area that seeks “provide a better future by linking people and nature now”.

Exploring a little more, The Biosphere have 3 functions spread across the 3 zones.

The functions are:

- Conservation (of ecosystems, habitats, species and genes)
- Development (i.e. sustainable development or use of the area)
- Logistics (research, training and knowledge sharing)

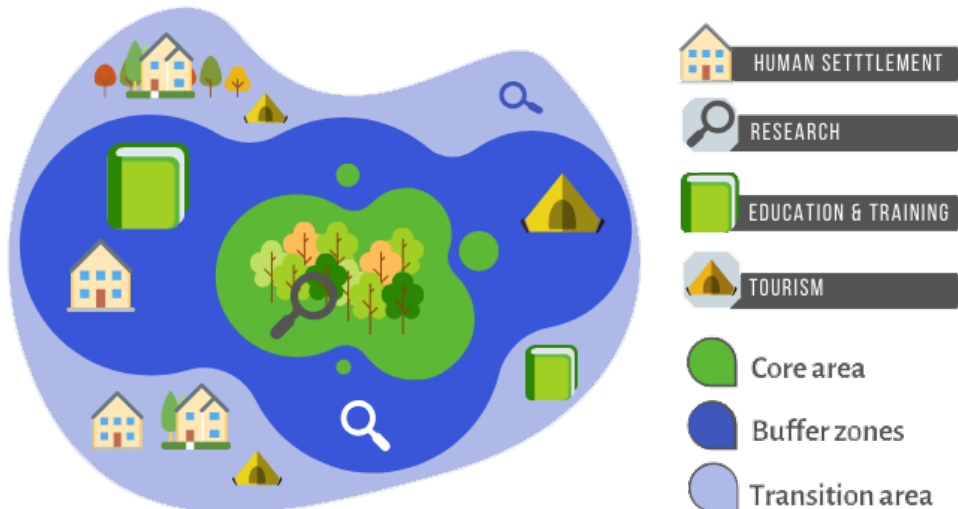


Figure 2 Figurative zonation of biosphere reserves

The biosphere zones are:

- Core area(s) areas of significant biodiversity value, protected and managed primarily for conservation.
- Buffer Zones; designated areas around the core areas that support the conservation objectives and are a means to extend good practices from the core area.
- Transition area; the widest extent of the biosphere reserve that encapsulates the character of the area and a sense of place that can bring alignment with stakeholders towards working together for sustainable development.

The functions are applied across all 3 zones to various degrees. The most exciting area for most Biosphere Reserves is the transition area where there is much greater emphasis on working with communities and businesses in transitioning to more sustainable ways of living. The whole world needs to transition to net zero and address the ecological crises, but it needs regions to pave the way for others to follow. This is a key purpose of the designation.

For the Forest of Dean area it creates an opportunity to enhance economic and social opportunities around the natural capital within the area; whether that is the Forests, the farmed land, the floodplains of the Severn Estuary or the slopes of the Wye Valley. Other industries that operate in the area will have an impact on these assets that can be changed to be less damaging or even restorative but equally

profitable. As has been shown in other biosphere reserves around the world, the designation and its governance should provide a creative space for the community to decide upon and create a future that works with the grain of nature and a better place in which to live, work and visit.

Context for the designation of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Biodiversity Context

The area that the group have prioritised for the Biosphere reserve is the Forest of Dean Local planning authority area as a minimum.

The Forest of Dean area sits on the border with Wales and shares the Wye Valley as a boundary area to the west. To the south and east are the upper reaches of the Severn Estuary which is a Special Area of conservation due to its importance for its intertidal habitats, migratory fish species including Sea Lamprey, River Lamprey and Twaite shad. To the North is the Malvern Hills with the Leden valley between.

Whilst the Landscape Character Assessment for the district identifies 15 landscape character types and 43 individual landscape character areas, the district can be divided up in 5 areas in terms of landscape/biodiversity interests. These are:

- The Forest of Dean: The Forest of Dean is an iconic woodland area recognised for its expanse of ancient semi natural woodland, heathland with commercially managed plantations.
- Wye valley area limestone plateau and hills; the mix of steep limestone wooded cliffs and important woodland ecology backed by the rolling areas and plateau of large woodlands and farmland with hedgerows.
- The Severn Estuary Floodplains: the large intertidal sands expanse in the upper Severn estuary Special area of conservation and the natural floodplain area that has opportunities for habitat restoration.
- Wooded hills; the undulating land to the north and east of the main forest area with traditional farmed landscape, pocketed with woodland, and the dry acid grassland and open farmland.
- Unwooded Vale area; shown as an opportunity for traditional orchard landscape restoration, currently dominated by mixed farming, small and discrete pockets of woodland with a reasonable network of hedges. The various horticultural practices and overall food production in the area can be a platform for sustainable development approaches.

The biodiversity network and the opportunities for habitat expansion are complex but will set a basis from identifying how the designation may take form and add value to the nature restoration aspirations set out by the communities.

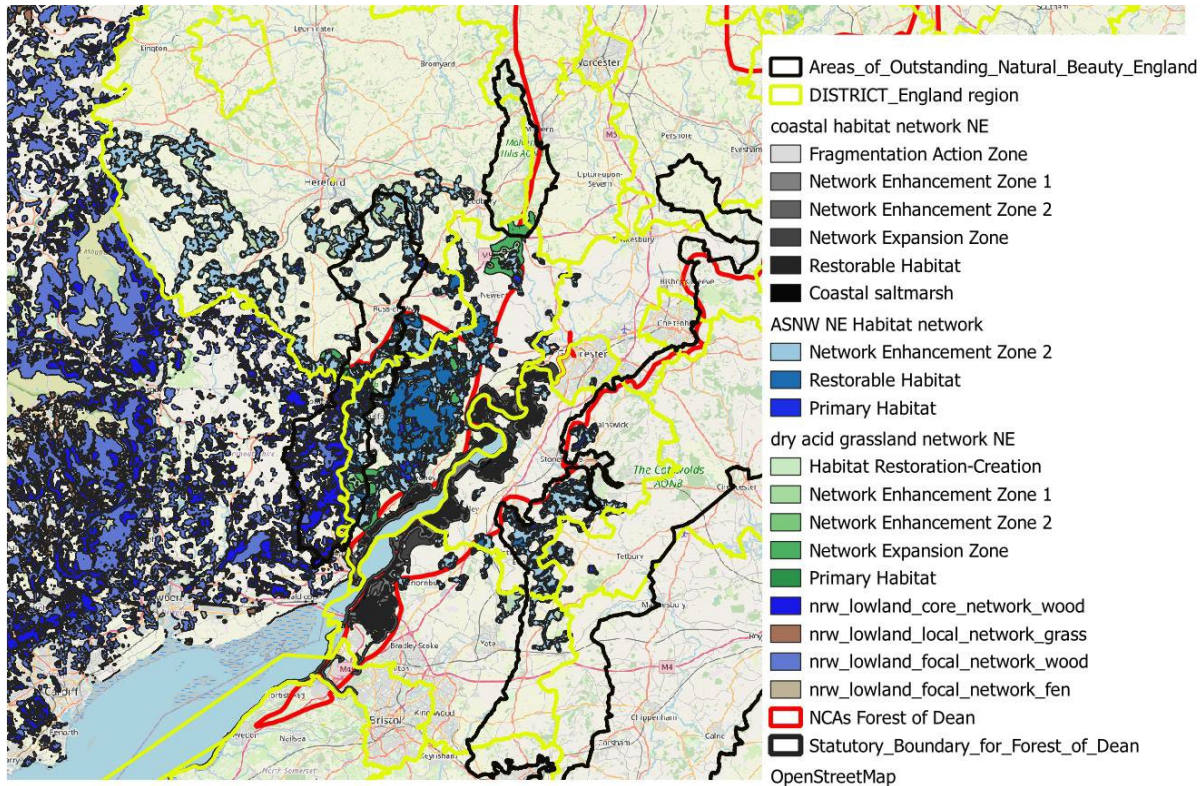


Figure 1 Designations and habitat types

Settlement Pattern

Cultural and historical heritage is strong with some very distinctive aspects especially around the FoD. The legacy of the industrial revolution, the forest and the resulting patterns of settlement are still evident though in some areas becoming masked by newer development.

The settlement pattern in the FoDD is very diverse, reflecting the FoD (i.e. the statutory forest) itself and the concentration of settlement on its margins, but also other very distinctive areas such as the Wye valley and St Briavels Common. The Estuary, escarpment and the landforms of the agricultural land to the north are notable. The landscape Assessment of 2002 has the best discussion and intro to these. <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/yvqf5iaz/forest-of-dean-district-landscape-character-assessment-report.pdf>

Housing requirements and market

The district is under some pressure for housing development in some parts though historically this has not been as acute as in very recent times. This is not mirrored in the relatively slow demand for employment workspace which has not kept up with housing, or the moderate decline in sectors such as manufacturing, which is still important in the area for 16% of the working population. The high proportion of micro enterprises in the district epitomises many rural areas in the UK with the practices of working from home and local economies linked into a wider world. There are some important and innovative enterprises within the whole however.

Currently the government's standard method suggests housing provision should be in excess of the up to date ONS forecast. This would set the provision at about 7440 new dwellings being required over 20 years to 2041. A better approach if allowed by proposed changes to the system could use more recent ONS forecasts with no add on for affordable housing as is currently applied under the standard method. This could reduce the overall requirement to about 5800- which is more manageable and probably realistic. The current standard method produces a figure which stretches the capacity of existing towns and villages or could require a new settlement. The basic constraints of protected landscapes, ecology, flooding, and a sensible consideration of things like accessibility lead to a limited range of growth options. This suggests continued growth at about 300 dwellings per year on a base of about 37000 (87000 population). (Ref local Plan)

The most recent draft Local Plan strategy proposed growth at Lydney, Newent and Beachley plus a range of other locations aligned to transport routes and missing the main constraints. The main constraints include a virtual embargo on new development in the forest itself (statutory forest) except within the various freeholds within and on some previously developed sites. Ancient woodland or former ancient woodland abounds but the starting point is the limits on sale of the FoD itself which prevents development. This includes the very important and distinctive landscape of the so called forest waste around the margins of the planted areas. (Ref local Plan)

Transport networks

Current communications rely on a few main roads and see considerable congestion most notably at either end of the A48 (Gloucester and Chepstow). Public transport is vestigial, though there is a rail station at Lydney. There is scope for change using the basic network for more sustainable travel, improving rail and developing active travel/ encouraging more working from home.

Although the FoDD stretches north of the M50 there are big differences between north and south, not just because of the FoD but the influence of the River Leadon and its landscapes but also the Malvern Hills and the more typical agricultural land as found in and around the Severn Vale.

Regeneration

The revised Local Plan has an ambitious regeneration strategy, plans and projects as set out by the council here; [Regeneration - Forest of Dean District Council](#). Projects of note include Lydney Harbour, Five Acres (recreation and economic redevelopment), Cinderford Northern Quarter (housing).

The Forest Economic Partnership runs a programme of projects emerging from a insightful Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Treats (SWOT) assessment to be found here <https://fep2050.co.uk/>.

FODD (Forest of Dean District) Landscape and designations

The FODD both benefit and is constrained by landscape and ecology designations which reflect the distinctive nature and variety of landscapes and habitats across the area. The west (Wye Valley), the core (Statutory Forest), and Severnside are however most notable. Bat SACs generally follow this pattern but not exclusively and they have an area of influence well beyond the extent of the designated areas. Ancient Woodland and Former ancient woodland cover large areas, many of which have other designations too.

Cultural and historical heritage is strong with some very distinctive aspects especially around the FoD. The legacy of the industrial revolution, the forest and the resulting patterns of settlement are still evident though in some areas becoming masked by newer development.

The settlement pattern in the FoDD is very diverse, reflecting the FoD (i.e. the statutory forest) itself and the concentration of settlement on its margins, but also other very distinctive areas such as the Wye valley and St Briavels Common. The Estuary, escarpment and the landforms of the agricultural land to the north are notable.

The landscape Assessment of 2002 contains a most valuable introduction to these.

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/yvqf5iaz/forest-of-dean-district-landscape-character-assessment-report.pdf>

The Glover Review of national Landscapes and the government's response is also beneficial in understanding the benefit of national and international designations

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response> Glover recognises the Forest of Dean on page P121

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf): "**The Forest of Dean** was on the original list in the 1947

Hobhouse report linked with the Wye Valley, which was designated as an AONB on its own in 1971.

There have been several attempts since then to fulfil the expectation that the Forest of Dean would be designated. There now appears to be considerable local support that national designation would be good. There is a collaborative National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported project (the Foresters' Forest) which would appear to provide an excellent jumping-off point for a new designation. **We support it"** .

The more recent work from the "Forest We Want" (<https://fep2050.co.uk/projects/the-forest-we-want/>) indicates 87% of respondents to the survey that the district would benefit from becoming a biosphere reserve.

There is a lengthy back history relating to studies and attempts to secure special status for the Forest of Dean and provide some protection and support for its sustainable evolution. Much of the case set out in the Review of Special Status prepared by the Countryside Agency in 1999

(<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/v0ooe2xi/review-of-special-status-1999-vol-1.pdf>) remains valid.

Section 9 of the Executive Summary recommends that 'the core area to be considered for Special Status should relate to the Hundred of St Briavels which encompasses the ancient Forest, and the relevant public consultation'.

It is the opinion of the FODD Council that the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve designation has the potential to meet these objectives. The objectives and benefits of the designation can be found here; tgbr_en.pdf (<unesco.org>)

The following report sets out how the Zonation Framework could be applied to a FODD and performs an options appraisal. This includes a SWOT analysis of the options, reports on the collaborative approach to selecting a draft preferred option for further assessment.

As a part of the next steps from the Foresters Forest Programme, the FODDC undertook some awareness raising about the concept of the Biosphere Reserve including meetings of the economic partnership, council members had sessions through the Foresters Forest Lottery project to look at

how the Forest can have a sustainable future and recognise the special biological and cultural characteristics of the Forest. The Forest Economic Partnership, as indicated earlier undertook work to prepare of a report on "[The Forest We Want](#)" which furthered the awareness and views about the benefits of a biosphere reserve designation.

This report summarises a project delivered by FEP supported on a voluntary basis by economists employed by the ONS as part of a programme to support local community initiatives. The study examined the opportunities that a designation might bring in terms of economic activity generated by bringing woodlands back into management and for creating supply stock for a glue-laminate production plant. As an example of facilitating working natural capital, the study concluded that the return to the area based on moderate coordination and management costs for the biosphere reserve could yield over 7 times the priming investment with a median value of 3.89 times the initial investment.

It is the experience of other Biospheres that the investment in creating and running the Biosphere designation has a return of between 7 times and 25 on that annual investment based on finance levered in from project resources.

The conclusion of the awareness and the studies led the council to a commitment to investigate further the implementation of the designation with an ambition that it would benefit and cover the entire district area, or more.

Zoning Framework for the Forest of Dean Area UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

Biosphere Reserves must have 3 zones to qualify for nomination. These are:

- Core Area
- Buffer Zone
- Transition Area

The reserves also have to carry out 3 functions which are deployed in all 3 zones to varying degrees. These functions are:

- Conservation (of habitats, species and genetic resources)
- Development (i.e. human activity that should be considered sustainable development or progress towards it)
- Logistic Function (better described as knowledge generation that can be shared within and beyond the biosphere reserve for the wider world to learn from towards sustainable development.)

As set out below, a biosphere reserve can have multiple core areas and they may represent different ecosystems e.g. marine, wetland, woodland etc. These tend to lead the character of the area in some biosphere reserves and therefore the area. In other ways the extent can be determined by the beneficiaries of the ecosystems services from the site and therefore involving sustainable development in places not of the same habitat as the core area.

Core areas:

Requirement; the sites must be of bioregional significance and be protected for biodiversity in the long term. The primary purpose of the designation should be for biodiversity. The technical guidance from UNESCO Quotes "A biosphere reserve must have one or more core areas, . These are legally protected sites for conserving biological diversity, monitoring minimally disturbed ecosystems, and undertaking non-destructive research and other low-impact uses (e.g. education), and so on." There is no minimum proportion stated for the size of core as compared to the whole BR but it must be appropriate for the character of the area.

It is recognized that there are very few truly natural habitats in the UK that are not impacted by some human intervention. Even Ancient Semi Natural Woodlands will have some history of intervention and coastal habitats are impacted by water quality and fisheries activities around them. We therefore rely on the legal status.

It is possible for a biosphere reserve to have multiple core areas provided they each have a buffer zone/s surrounding them.

Suitable UK designations include:

1 Sites formerly under the Natura 2000 network which includes Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

2 Ramsar sites listed under the Ramsar Convention

3 SSSI under the 1949 NPAC, 1982 WAC, 1990 Env Act and 2021 EA

4 National Nature Reserves

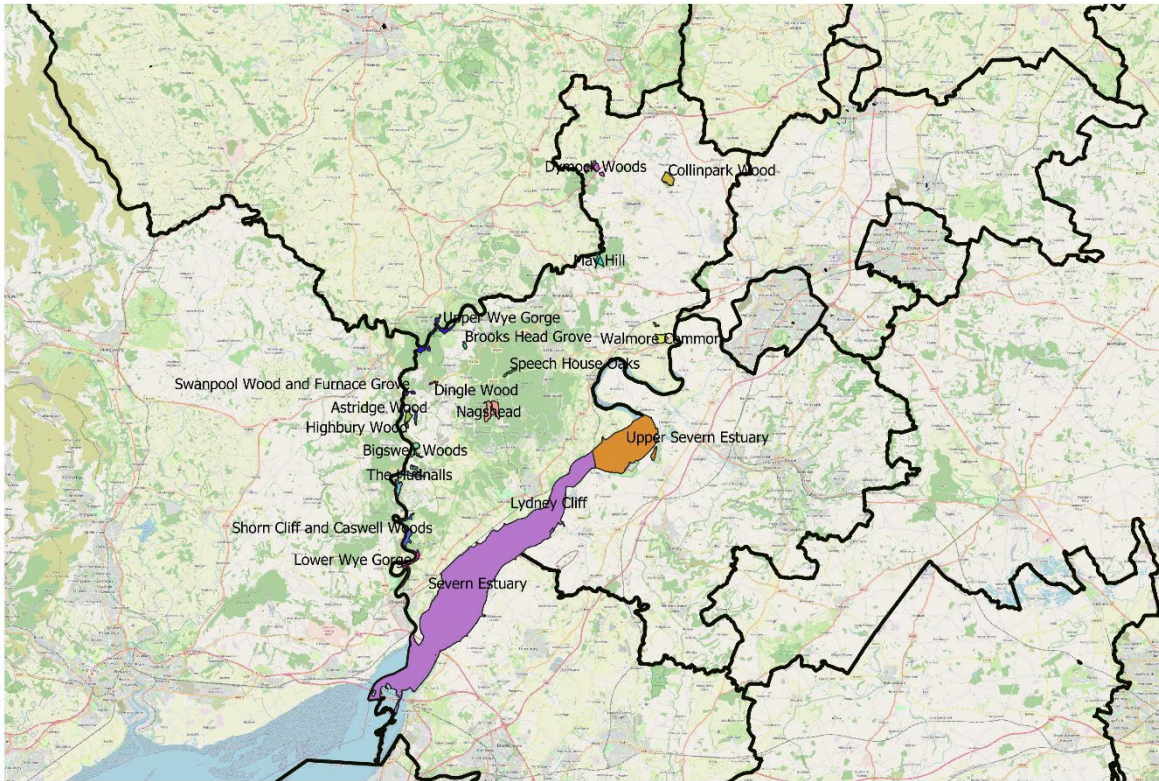


Figure 2 Designations that could form the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Core areas

Buffer Zones:

Requirement; To be designated land ideally for a long term that provides the means for policy and practice interventions that support the aims and conservation of the core areas. Some member states describe these differently for example as “support zone(s)” which perhaps describes their function more positively.

The buffer should be ideally contiguous with the core area and supporting all around the core area.

The guidelines state: “The buffer zone should surround or adjoin the core area(s) as a protective belt. At the same time, it should allow for a degree of sustainable use of the natural resources. There is no globally valid minimum size for the buffer zone.”

In considering the sites there should be a hierarchy of approach; the further one goes down the hierarchy the more explanation and possibly tenuous the options become; designation or stature, (national and local); policy area (in the adopted local plan for example), strategy that has long term relevance and has resources to intervene.

There are sites in the UK that have used agri-environment agreements to define buffers zones, which do meet the needs of the criteria at the time they are operational. However, they are seldom guaranteed for the long term. Biodiversity Net Gain, Nutrient Neutrality delivered with a nature-based solution are upcoming initiatives that are longer term (C 30 years to 100 hundred years) and therefore could be included as buffer areas. In Canada land that has been transferred into a heritage tax relieve scheme has been used as buffering land, and as its condition has improved, it has been relisted as core area in successive periodic reviews. Although this is a good sign of continuous improvement, it has left a problem of then identifying the subsequent buffer zone to be contiguous.

In this particular case we have explored the possibility of using the FE Forest Plan to fine tune the areas that will be best retained as buffer and enhanced for conservation and those that remain with productivity as a primary goal. The conclusion was that the granularity was too complex. In Galloway and South Ayrshire there were expectations from some stakeholders that productive forest would be reverted in greater quantities. In this case it was felt that it was probably best to be very clear in communications about how the forest plan fitted the criteria and emphasising that the UK Forestry Standard ensures that conservation is addressed even in the productive areas. Further, with less emphasis on the FE Forest Plan, the sustainable practices should be encouraged for all woodland owners in the Forest of Dean and not just the public sector.

Including the AONB as part of the scheme can add value to the AONB as another active partner. For example the AONB and Exmoor in North Devon gladly discharges its duties with the Biosphere Reserve and gets projects delivered in the area that have economies of scale of working with a wider area.

Suitable areas for buffer zones include:

- 1 AONBs and National Parks, especially since they now have a duty for biodiversity from the Environment Act
- 2 Other SSSI's not in the core area
- 3 State owned land that has biodiversity duties
- 4 Designated traditional commons where the common rights and management are compatible with the core areas (e.g. the statutory area of the Forest of Dean overseen by the Verderers of the Forest of Dean) and land declared open under the CROW Act 2000
- 5 Local Nature Reserves and County Wildlife Sites
- 6 Areas of land that have been designated for other protection reasons that brings along with it improved conservation practices as a consequence. E.g. Drinking water protection areas, designated Shellfish waters, etc.
- 7 NGO owned and inalienable land managed with conservation as an objective (e.g. Wildlife Trust reserves, RSPB reserves and National Trust land)

In this case we have looked at the options from flood risk management policy and mapping for flood Zone 3 around the Severn estuary as something that bridges strategy and policy. Another option that may be considered though has not been fully tested is to use the consultation zones around SSSI as

defined by Natural England as a type of policy area. The use of these is likely to be restricted to the most probable risks to the SSSI and not every risk.

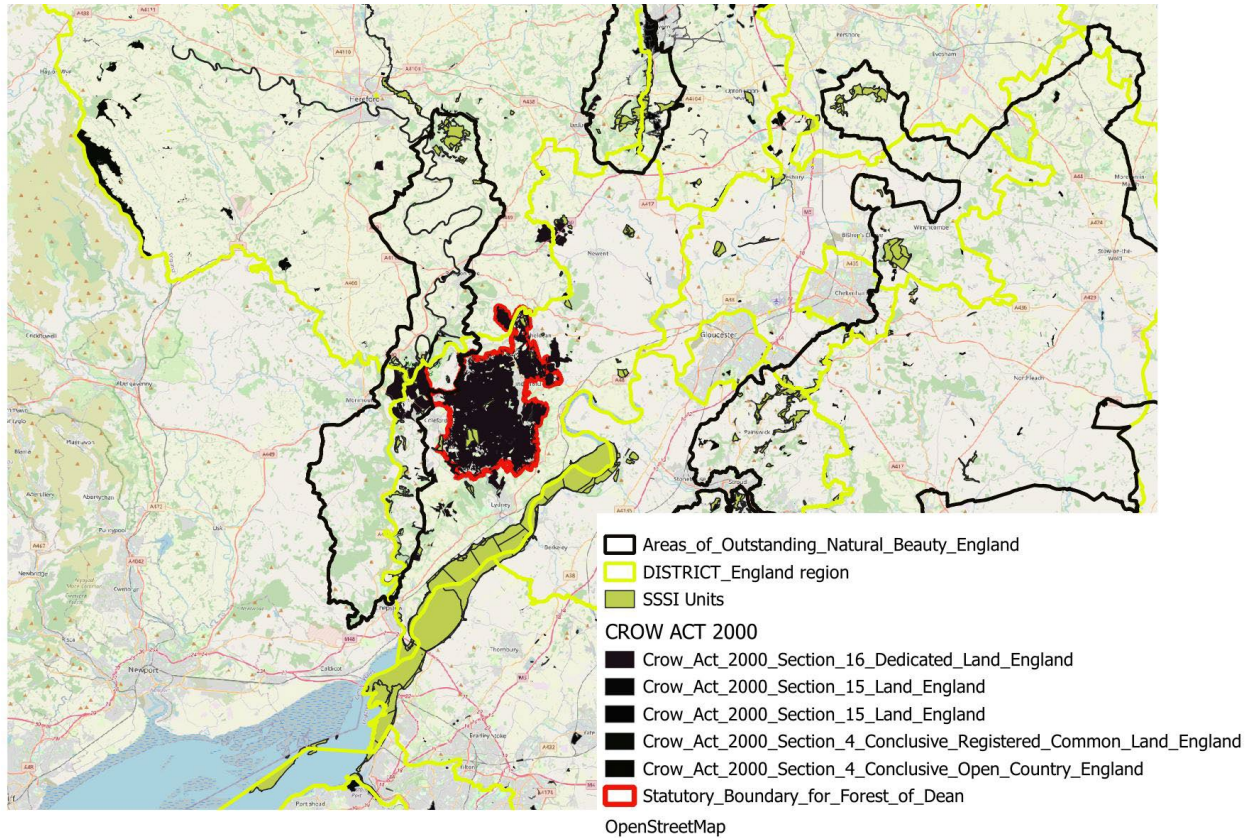


Figure 3 Designations fitting in the framework for various Biosphere reserve buffer zones

Transition areas:

These are less well prescriptive in the definition. No legal constraints are expected nor implied other than what the resident community chooses through local plan policies for example.

The guidelines state “The external limits of the transition area can be formed by natural phenomena (e.g. rivers, lakes, steep slopes, forest edges, etc.) or created artificially in the form of roads, railroads, state borders, administrative boundaries, municipality cadastres, territorial entities, watersheds, etc.).

it is important that all the constituent competent authorities are signed up to the Biosphere Reserve nomination. This can be a challenge in developing transboundary reserves (crossing between nations such as England and Wales in this case) or even on a more local level such as local planning authorities. Before discounting anything for these political or logistical reasons, it is best to focus on what makes an identifiable area which is ecologically cogent and makes sense to the cultural identity of the people in the area.

Extensions and boundary changes can be made, however due to the limited resources in the designation process (International Advisory Committee, the UNESCO secretariat and the MaB Council) the revisions are only encouraged at the 10 Year Periodic review of each Biosphere Reserve. Areas can be informally added and join in the activity of the Biosphere Reserve but not formally adopted until ratified through

the periodic review process. Most reserves operate with a “porous” boundary to develop actions at the most appropriate scale and with the right partners, it is only the reporting and badging benefits that are restricted to the boundaries.

Suitable boundaries to consider:

- Forest of Dean District Boundary (deemed as minimum desirable through consultation with FODD) (Scenario 1)
- Forest of Dean District, plus the Wye Valley AONB (including or excluding the areas within Wales) (Scenario 2)
- Expanded area including upper Severn Estuary and floodplain (Scenario 3)

Scenarios for the Designation

Methodology

Data sets provided from public GIS sources (e.g. environment.data.gov.uk, data.map.gov.wales) Gloucestershire Local Nature partnership for Ecosystem assessment and habitat expansions etc) kindly provided by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Forestry England data sets provided by the team from the regional office, have been compiled to create the mapping options for the zones using the framework of designations and policy areas as described above. These have been set into the scenarios that match the options described in the invitation to tender and by the Biosphere Reserve Action Group.

Each scenario describes the choice of Core areas, Buffer zones and, for scenarios 2 and 3, a nominal outline. None of these are final proposals but each requires discussion with stakeholders and communities to settle on a preferred option for the initial nomination to be taken forward.

The mapping is followed by a brief SWOT analysis of those option which builds incrementally on the first scenario.

The scenarios develop from a designation that covers the entire district area as the minimum stated by the authority.

Scenario 1a Entire district with a woodland focussed theme

Scenario 1b Entire district with a mix core areas of different habitat/species protection

Scenario 2 Forest of Dean with Wye valley (therefore crossing into Wales and Herefordshire)

Scenario 3 Forest of Dean and Wye Valley and Upper Severn Estuary

Scenario 4 Hybrid of Scenario 1 and 3 without the Welsh part of the Wye Valley

Scenario 1: Entire Forest of Dean District

In this scenario a basic model has been produced that meets the minimum criteria of the all the district council area of the Forest of Dean. It builds from a suite of core SSSIs that have a strong woodland component only. This is to emphasise the specialness of the woodlands of the area and the outstanding characteristics of the Forest of Dean. The buffer zone is the Statutory Forest and Wye Valley AONB areas that are contained within the local authority area.

Short List of Potential Core Areas

- Nags Head: SSSI and RSPB reserve. Central to the Forest of Dean and fits well with the geography. Therefore, in theory this is a good core area to propose. One drawback is the current condition of the SSSI which is unfavourable and not recovering. This is due to over grazing contributed to largely by wild boar, this is not allowing the normal ancient woodland flora to colonise/recolonise and is restricting regeneration of trees resulting in a poor age structure. Provided these problems can be overcome, it will make a suitable core area.
- Speech House SSSI;
- Wye Valley Woodland SSSIs collection: These include the following sites which have been pre-selected to those in favourable condition and or form part of the Wye Valley Woodlands SAC.
 - Dingle Wood
 - The Hudnalls (NNR and limited intervention woodland)
 - Shorn Cliff and Highbury Woods
 - Highbury Woods
 - Astridge Woods
 - Lower Wye Gorge
 - Bigsweir Wood
- Dymock Woods SSSI

Choice of Buffer Zones

- Statutory Forest of Dean Area
- Wye Valley AONB
- Dymock woods dedicated CROW Act land.
- Severn Estuary SAC (if no buffer to it can be found)

Transition area:

Land in the Forest of Dean District Area

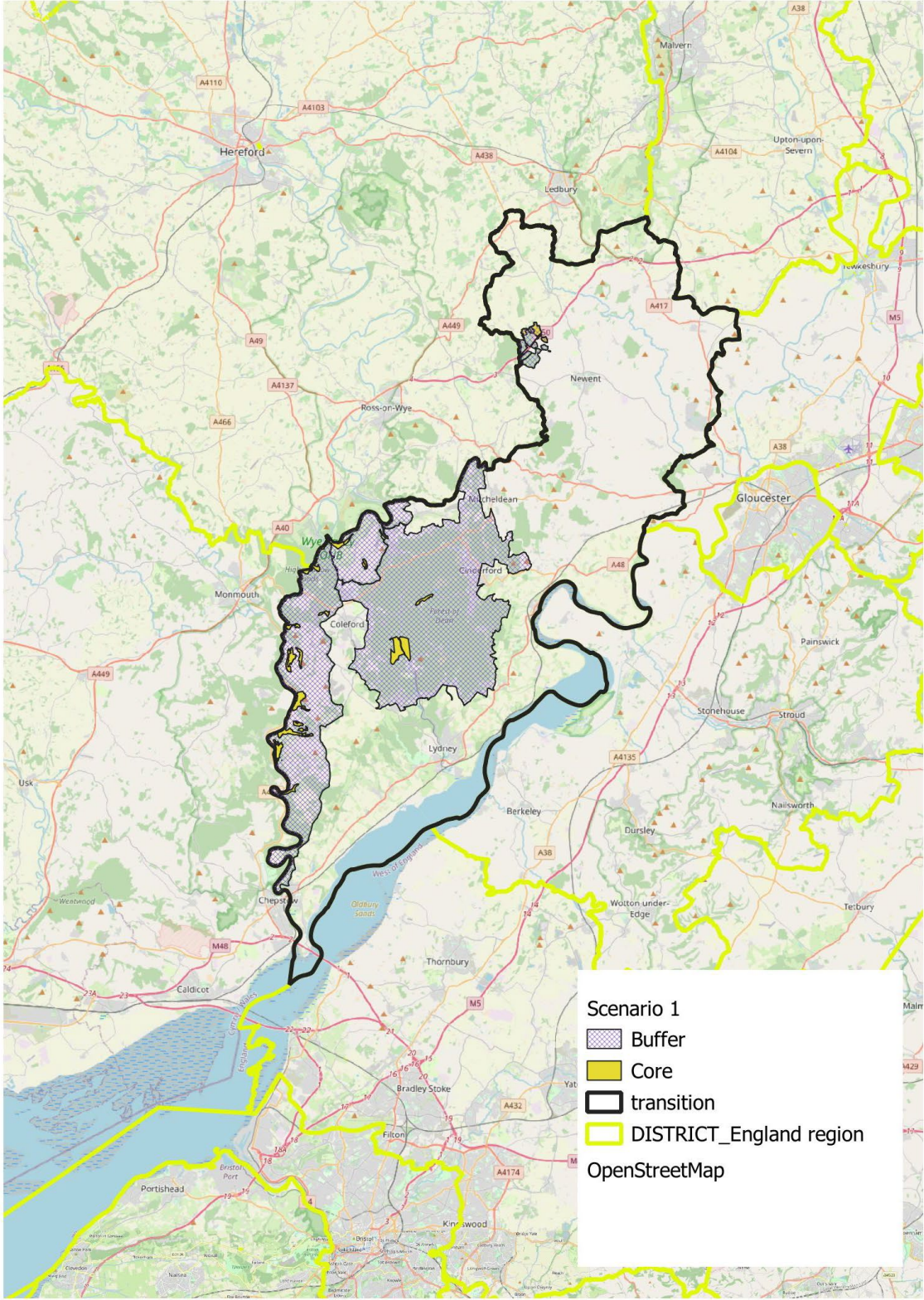


Figure 4 Scenario Forest of Dean District only focused on woodlands

SWOT analysis of Scenario 1

Strengths

- Simple to apply due to there being a single local authority.
- Will conform with local plan for FoDD
- Strong Identity around the woodland and forest
- It is a neat successor to the work established in the Foresters Forest Programme
- Focus on woodland that could be the basis of a clear and concise narrative to communicate the vision.
- It encompasses all the growth areas and economic initiatives as set out in the revised local plan.
- Enables a proven and effective means of delivering the FODD policies on health and wellbeing, environment including Net Zero and statutory responsibilities such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain.

Weaknesses

- Does not reflect the heathland and acid grassland sites and opportunities at the high level, though will do in its implementation.
- Does not address the coast/estuarine character area or north of A40 objectives effectively therefore does not bring additionality
- Does not address the objectives of neighbouring communities with similar or shared identities and objectives.
- Funding opportunities are limited to what is available within the District
- Extremely difficult to sell to rest of district as might be seen to fail to provide additionality to existing protections repeatedly raised in FEP discussions.

Opportunities

- The Biosphere designation supports community engagement with all sectors to achieve a co-created vision. This could provide opportunity for collaboration and integration of programmes, bring efficiencies and enable critical mass for traditional funding bids.
- The Biosphere designation enables communication and partnerships with Biospheres around the world sharing learning on forest and catchment management.
- Provides an effective mechanism for community and business engagement with local spatial planning.
- Provides local businesses with access to a UNESCO community with experience of sustainable business planning, including ESG.
- Provides local businesses with access to a UNESCO community with experience of Green Finance investment opportunities.

Threats

- There is a cost associated with setting up and sustaining the Biosphere Partnership, creating the strategy, action plan and reporting progress. This is an essential element of retaining the designation at each 10 year periodic review.

- The statutory forest designation has its internal issues about common rights and how they may be counter to sustainable development; for example uncontrolled grazing and pannage from wild boar with its impact on the forest regeneration or free mining of coal and the policies on fossil fuels.
- There is initial confusion between this designation and others in the area.
- There is less opportunity to include communities in the same hydrological catchment such as the Wye in activity and funding rounds.
- The FODD Biosphere would have to invest more in integration activity with other local authorities.
- As a consequence of the transitional zones being based on a political boundary it does not efficiently align stakeholders with significant risks to sustainable water management pressures such as land use on water quality (i.e. nutrients and microorganisms), water resources (drought resilience) and flood risk.

Scenario 1b: Entire District area of Forest of Dean with range of habitats

This scenario is the same as 1 with the added areas of the of the Upper Sever Estuary SAC that are within the district. The area also includes the Flood zone as a policy buffer area. There are no additional core areas due to them not being surrounded by an adequate buffer to meet the guidelines, but at least recognises these extra habitats. The estuary SAC is not advisable as a core area because UNESCO prefer core areas to be surrounded by a buffer and not at the exposed edge of the Biosphere reserve. It can be done, but it requires considerable justification in the nomination.

Short List of Potential Core Areas

- Nags Head: SSSI and RSPB reserve. Central to the Forest of Dean and fits well with the geography. Therefore, in theory this is a good core area to propose. One drawback is the current condition of the SSSI which is unfavourable and not recovering. This is due to over grazing contributed to largely by wild boar, this is not allowing the normal ancient woodland flora to colonise/recolonise and is restricting regeneration of trees resulting in a poor age structure. Provided these problems can be overcome, it will make a suitable core area.
- Speech House SSSI;
- Wye Valley Woodland SSSIs collection: These include the following sites which have been pre-selected to those in favourable condition and or form part of the Wye Valley Woodlands SAC.
 - Dingle Wood
 - The Hudnalls (NNR and limited intervention woodland)
 - Shorn Cliff and Highbury Woods
 - Highbury Woods
 - Astridge Woods
 - Lower Wye Gorge
 - Bigsweir Wood
- Dymock Woods SSSI

Choice of Buffer Zones (clipped to the District boundary)

- Statutory Forest of Dean Area
- Wye Valley AONB

- Dymock woods dedicated CROW Act land.
- May Hill
- Severn Estuary SAC
- Flood Zone 3 of the Severn Estuary

Transition area:

Land and intertidal area in the Forest of Dean District Area

SWOT analysis of Scenario 1b

Strengths

- Simple to apply due to there being a single local authority.
- Strong Identity around the woodland and forest
- It is a neat successor to the work established in the Foresters Forest Programme
- It encompasses all the growth areas and economic initiatives as set out in the revised local plan.
- Enables a proven and effective means of delivering the FODD policies on health and wellbeing, environment including Net Zero and statutory responsibilities such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Added habitats means that there could be more ownership by the wider district community.

Weaknesses

- Misses the big opportunity of the SAC as a core area.
- Does not address the objectives of neighbouring communities with similar or shared identities and objectives.
- Funding opportunities are limited to what is available within the District.

Opportunities

- The Biosphere designation supports community engagement with all sectors to achieve a co-created vision. This could provide opportunity for collaboration and integration of programmes, bring efficiencies and enable critical mass for traditional funding bids.
- The Biosphere designation enables communication and partnerships with Biospheres around the world sharing learning on forest and catchment management.
- Provides an effective mechanism for community and business engagement with local spatial planning.
- Provides local businesses with access to a UNESCO community with experience of sustainable business planning, including ESG.
- Provides local businesses with access to a UNESCO community with experience of Green Finance investment opportunities.

Threats

- There is a cost associated with setting up and sustaining the Biosphere Partnership, creating the strategy, action plan and reporting progress. This is an essential element of retaining the designation at each 10 year periodic review.
- The statutory forest designation has its internal issues about common rights and how they may be counter to sustainable development; for example uncontrolled grazing and pannage from wild boar with its impact on the forest regeneration or free mining of coal and the policies on fossil fuels.
- There is initial confusion between this designation and others in the area.
- There is less opportunity to include communities in the same hydrological catchment such as the Wye in activity and funding rounds.
- The FODD Biosphere would have to invest more in integration activity with other local authorities.
- As a consequence of the transitional zones being based on a political boundary it does not efficiently align stakeholders with significant risks to sustainable water management pressures such as land use on water quality (i.e. nutrients and microorganisms), water resources (drought resilience) and flood risk.

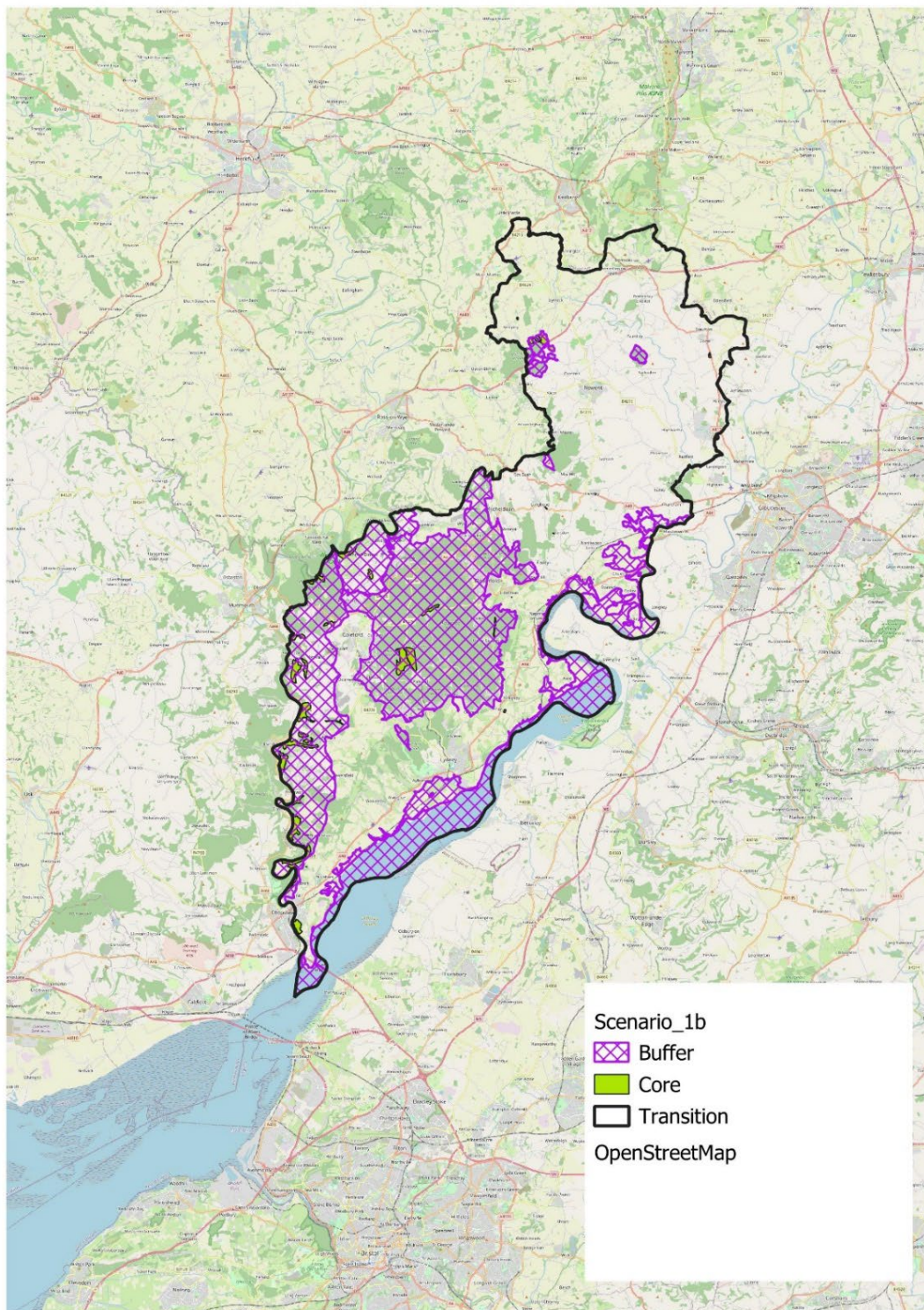


Figure 5 Scenario 1b With Severn Estuary as buffer and other grassland habitat core areas

Scenario 2: Forest of Dean District with Wye Valley AONB (extending into Wales)

Scenario description

In this scenario, the model extends to include all of the Wye Valley AONB as a buffer zone and all of the Statutory Forest that extends beyond the Forest of Dean District Boundary. This option retains very much of the Forest of Dean identity, allows protected areas for buffer zones to cover a majority of the proposed BR area, includes the Herefordshire part of the River Wye where there is a concerted campaign to protect and enhance water quality. Extra SSSI have been included that have features other than woodland (such as grasslands and waterbodies, but does not include the SSSI that are over houses and quarries). The reason for this is that as developed sites, they are less subject to natural processes and are normally focussed around a single species rather than an ecosystem. The transition zone uses the Forest of Dean District boundary on the eastern flank, but follows a line of convenience that has been determined by roughly following major or secondary roads.

Core Areas

The option Wye Valley AONB (extending into Wales) and therefore includes SSSI of that area as Core area.

- Nags Head
- Speech House
- Dymock Woods
- Wye Valley Suite
 - Dingle Wood
 - The Hudnalls (NNR and limited intervention woodland)
 - Shorn Cliff and Highbury Woods
 - Highbury Woods
 - Astridge Woods
 - Lower Wye Gorge
 - Bigsweir Wood
 - Caerwood & Ashberry Goose House
 - Sharpnage Wood
 - Haugh Wood
 - Brooks Head Grove
 - Oridge Street Meadows
 - Pennsylvania Fields, Sedbury
 - Soudley Ponds
 - Cherry Hill Wood
 - Lea & Pagets Woods
 - Woodshuts Wood
 - Birch Wood
 - Astridge Wood
 - Kempley Daffodil Meadow

- Lower Wye Gorge
- Slade Brook
- Common Hill
- Capler Wood
- Park Wood
- Clarke's Pool Meadow
- Blaisdon Hall
- Swanpool Wood and Furnace Grove
- Longhope Hill
- Wilton Bluff, Ross-on-Wye
- Coughton Wood and Marsh
- Garden Cliff
- Great Doward

Buffer Zone

This option includes the Statutory Forest of Dean Area, entire Wye Valley AONB, May Hill, Devils Chapel Scowles, Dymock Woods CROW Land and Collin Park Wood.

Transition Area

The transitional area is open to discussion and benefits analysis with full engagement and commitment from partners in other Local Authorities. This could be based on emerging environmental and economic policy development. However, a detailed review of other local authority plans and policy is at present outside the scope of this assessment.

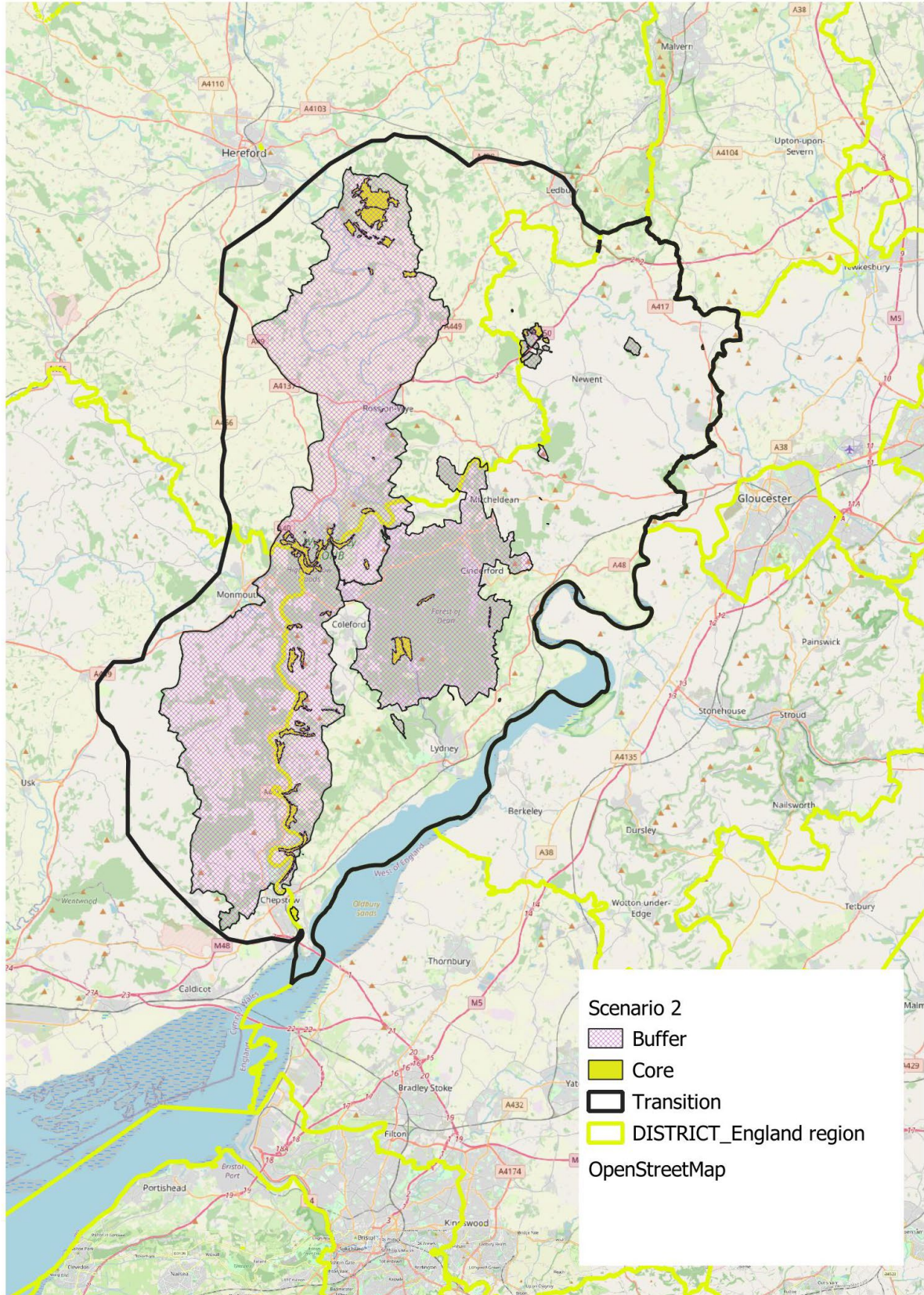


Figure 6 Scenario 2 Forest of Dean District with Wye Valley AONB (extending into Wales)

Scenario 2 SWOT analysis

Strengths

- More local authorities (3 in this option including one Welsh) brings a greater resilience to funding and operation of services to retain the designation such as maintaining the partnership.
- A catchment based approach that mitigates some of the threats posed by Scenario 1.
- A clear and concise narrative to communicate the vision is feasible due to the buffer and transition areas relying on landscape areas with strong environment definition and community connection.
- It allows access to funding through Welsh devolved government.
- It encompasses **all** the growth areas and economic initiatives as set out in the revised FODD local plan and the **some** of the neighbouring plans.
- Enables a proven and effective means of delivering the FODD policies on health and wellbeing, environment including Net Zero and statutory responsibilities such as LNRS and BNG.

Weaknesses

- Does not address the coast/estuarine character area objectives effectively.
- Brings the complexity of addressing the objectives of neighbouring communities with similar or shared identities and objectives, though may be differently prioritised.
-

Opportunities

- The Biosphere designation supports community engagement with all sectors to achieve a cocreated vision. This could provide opportunity for collaboration and integration of programmes, bring efficiencies and enable critical mass for traditional funding bids.
- The Biosphere designation enables communication and partnerships with Biospheres around the world sharing learning on forest and catchment management.
- Provides an effective mechanism for community and business engagement with local spatial planning.
- Provides local businesses with access to a UNESCO community with experience of sustainable business planning, including ESG.
- Provides local businesses with access to a UNESCO community with experience of Green Finance investment opportunities.
- More efficient and effective delivery of LNRS across political boundaries.

Threats

- There is a cost associated with setting up and sustaining the Biosphere Partnership, creating the strategy, action plan and reporting progress. This is an essential element of retaining the designation. A greater and more complex partnership may increase the resource required to set up and manage this. The opportunity for greater contribution and investment by more partners may not outweigh the need.
- There is initial confusion between this designation and others in the area. This is increased with more designations and across local and national political boundaries. It is noted that the international nature of the designation would mitigate this.

Scenario 3. Forest of Dean District with Wye Valley AONB (extending into Wales) and Severn Estuary

Scenario Description

In this Scenario building on from Scenario 2, the transition area extends across the Severn estuary and uses the A38 as a boundary of convenience extending from outside the City Boundary southwards to Thornbury and the M48. The Upper Severn Estuary SSSI is included along with the Severn Estuary SAC above the M48 crossing. The buffer zone uses Flood Zone3 as a policy area on both sides of the SAC.

Core Areas

The option Wye Valley AONB (extending into Wales) and therefore includes SSSI of that area as Core area and now includes the Upper Severn Estuary and large part of the Severn Estuary SAC upstream of the M4 crossing as a core area.

- Nags Head
- Speech House
- Dymock Woods
- Wye Valley Suite
 - Dingle Wood
 - The Hudnalls (NNR and limited intervention woodland)
 - Shorn Cliff and Highbury Woods
 - Highbury Woods
 - Astridge Woods
 - Lower Wye Gorge
 - Bigsweir Wood
 - Caerwood & Ashberry Goose House
 - Sharpnage Wood
 - Haugh Wood
 - Brooks Head Grove
 - Oridge Street Meadows
 - Pennsylvania Fields, Sedbury
 - Soudley Ponds
 - Cherry Hill Wood
 - Lea & Pagets Woods
 - Woodshuts Wood
 - Birch Wood
 - Astridge Wood
 - Kempley Daffodil Meadow
 - Lower Wye Gorge
 - Slade Brook
 - Common Hill
 - Capler Wood
 - Park Wood

- Clarke's Pool Meadow
- Blaisdon Hall
- Swanpool Wood and Furnace Grove
- Longhope Hill
- Wilton Bluff, Ross-on-Wye
- Coughton Wood and Marsh
- Garden Cliff
- Great Doward
- Upper Severn Estuary
- Severn Estuary

Buffer Zone

This option includes the Statutory Forest of Dean Area, entire Wye Valley AONB. May Hill, Dymock Woods CROW land, Flood Zone 3 in the Severn Estuary.

Transition Area

The transitional area is open to discussion and benefits analysis with full engagement and commitment from partners in other Local Authorities. This could be based on emerging environmental and economic policy development. However, a detailed review of other local authority plans and policy is at present outside the scope of this assessment.

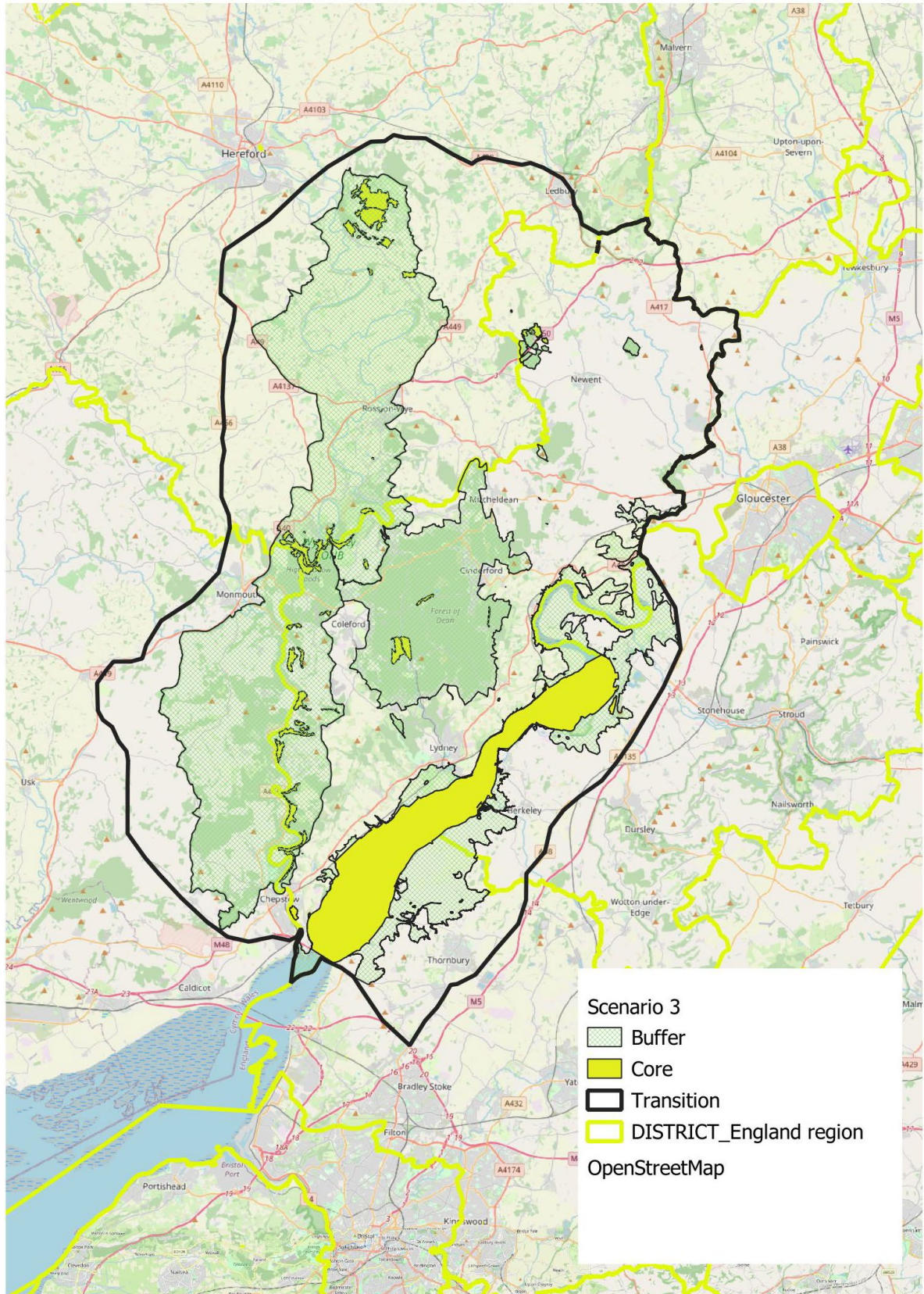


Figure 7 Scenario 2 Forest of Dean District with Wye Valley AONB (extending into Wales) Severn Estuary

SWOT Analysis of Scenario 3

Strengths

- More local authorities (5 in this option including one Welsh) brings a greater resilience to funding and operation of services to retain the designation such as maintaining the partnership.
- A catchment based approach that mitigates some of the threats posed by Scenario 1.
- It allows access to funding through Welsh devolved government and possibly Monmouthshire County Council .
- It encompasses **all** the growth areas and economic initiatives as set out in the revised FODD local plan and the **some** of the neighbouring plans.
- Enables a proven and effective means of delivering the FODD policies on health and wellbeing, environment including Net Zero and statutory responsibilities such as LNRS and BNG.
- Opportunity to deliver shared objectives with neighbouring authorities such as delivery of Net Zero and statutory responsibilities such and BNG where there is limited opportunity in that political boundary.

Weaknesses

- May begin to feel too diffuse and unconnected, though a good mitigation for this is emphasising the connections between the communities and the sites.

Opportunities

- Big habitat gain opportunities associated with the Severn Estuary and potential funding from a range of partners.
- WWT could be a key partner including the enhancement of Slimbridge.
- Possible synergies with the Severn Edge initiative for technology development and safe fusion energy.
- The BR can be a good conflict resolution mechanism
- The Biosphere designation supports community engagement with all sectors to achieve a cocreated vision. This could provide opportunity for collaboration and integration of programmes, bring efficiencies and enable critical mass for traditional funding bids.
- The Biosphere designation enables communication and partnerships with Biospheres around the world sharing learning on forest and catchment management.
- Provides an effective mechanism for community and business engagement with local spatial planning.

- Provides local businesses with access to a UNESCO community with experience of sustainable business planning, including ESG.
- Provides local businesses with access to a UNESCO community with experience of Green Finance investment opportunities.
- Opportunity to deliver shared objectives with neighbouring authorities such as delivery of Net Zero and statutory responsibilities such and BNG where there is limited opportunity in that political boundary.
- More efficient and effective delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies across political boundaries.

Threats

- May lose its identity as “Forest of Dean”
- There is a cost associated with setting up and sustaining the Biosphere Partnership, creating the strategy, action plan and reporting progress. This is an essential element of retaining the designation. A greater and more complex partnership may increase the resource required to set up and manage this. The opportunity for greater contribution and investment by more partners may not outweigh the need.
- Risk of funding opportunity, political power and capacity being biased towards the estuary and Severn Edge.
- There is initial confusion between this designation and other initiatives in the area e.g. the Severn Estuary Partnership. This is increased with more designations and across local and national political boundaries. It is noted that the international nature of the designation would mitigate this.

Scenario 4 Hybrid Option of Scenario 1 with Scenario 3

Scenario Description:

In this option only the FoD area of the Wye Valley AONB is used along with the Statutory Forest within the FoD District boundary and the Severn estuary option are added on to the area.

Core Areas

- Nags Head
- Speech House SSSI;
- Soudley Ponds
- Wye Valley Woodland SSSIs collection:
 - Dingle Wood
 - The Hudnalls (NNR and limited intervention woodland)
 - Shorn Cliff and Highbury Woods
 - Highbury Woods
 - Astridge Woods
 - Lower Wye Gorge
 - Bigsweir Wood
- Dymock Woods SSSI
- Soudley Ponds
- Severn Estuary SAC

Buffer Zones

- Statutory Forest of Dean Area within FoDD
- Wye Valley AONB within FoDD
- Dymock woods dedicated CROW Act land.
- Collin Wood
- May Hill
- Devil's Chapel Scowls
- Flood Zone 3 around the estuary

Transition Area

Based on the whole Forest of Dean District Area and reaching across the estuary to include parts of Stroud and South Gloucestershire District areas up to the A38 and downstream to the M48 road crossing.

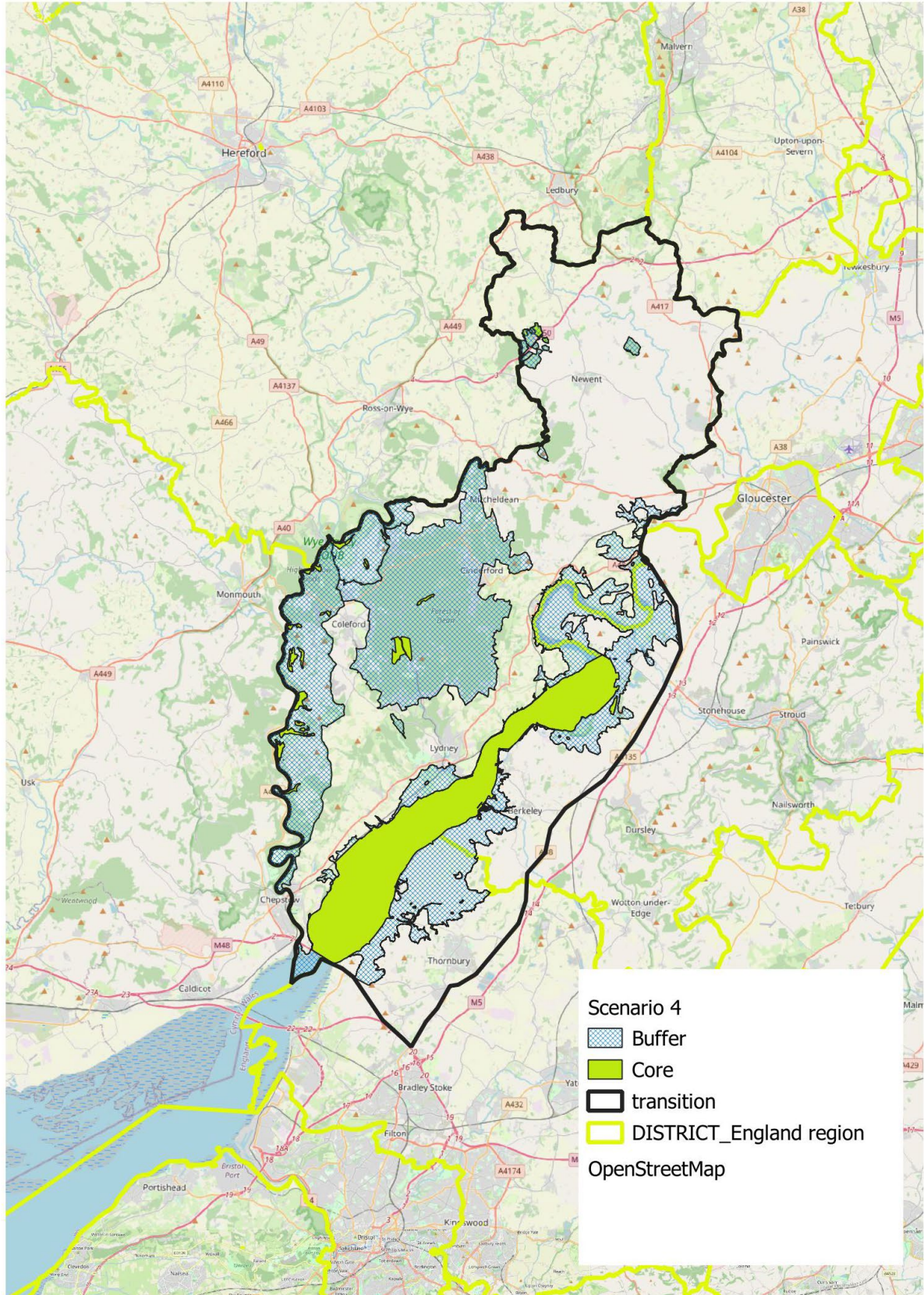


Figure 8 Scenario 4 (hybrid of Scenarios 1 and 3)

SWOT analysis of Scenario 4

Strengths

- Simpler to apply than Option 3 being all in one county plus one unitary authority.
- Strong Identity around the woodland and forest and also good relevance to the estuary as a dominant conservation feature
- It is a neat successor to the work established in the Foresters Forest Programme
- It encompasses all the growth areas and economic initiatives as set out in the revised local plan and opportunities on the left bank of the Severn
- Enables a proven and effective means of delivering the FODD, Stroud and South Gloucestershire policies on health and wellbeing, environment including Net Zero and statutory responsibilities such as LNRS and BNG.

Weaknesses

- Does not reflect the heathland and acid grassland sites and opportunities at the high level, though will do in its implementation.
- Does not address the objectives of neighbouring communities with similar or shared identities and objectives especially those in the Wye Valley
- Funding opportunities are limited to what is available within the County, (but there are 3 District authorities

Opportunities

- The Biosphere designation supports community engagement with all sectors to achieve a co-created vision. This could provide opportunity for collaboration and integration of programmes, bring efficiencies and enable critical mass for traditional funding bids.
- The Biosphere designation enables communication and partnerships with Biospheres around the world sharing learning on forest and catchment management.
- Provides an effective mechanism for community and business engagement with local spatial planning.
- Provides local businesses with access to a UNESCO community with experience of sustainable business planning, including ESG.
- Provides local businesses with access to a UNESCO community with experience of Green Finance investment opportunities.

Threats

- There is a cost associated with setting up and sustaining the Biosphere Partnership, creating the strategy, action plan and reporting progress. This is an essential element of retaining the designation at each 10 year periodic review.
- The statutory forest designation has its internal issues about common rights and how they may be counter to sustainable development; for example uncontrolled grazing and pannage from wild boar with its impact on the forest regeneration or free mining of coal and the policies on fossil fuels.
- There is initial confusion between this designation and others in the area.

- There is less opportunity to include communities in the same hydrological catchment such as the Wye in activity and funding rounds.
- As a consequence of the transitional zones being largely based on a political boundary it does not efficiently align stakeholders with significant risks to sustainable water management pressures such as land use on water quality (i.e. nutrients and microorganisms), water resources (drought resilience) and flood risk.

Summary of Communications with neighbouring bodies and interested agencies

Stakeholders have been identified for informal discussions only. These views cannot be taken as the formal position of the organisations until a more formal consultation is carried out.

Forestry England: Deputy Surveyor for the Forest of Dean, and Forest Management Director of the West England Forest District believes the BR will be a good thing. Agrees that the core areas should include Nags head and Speech House. Recommends the buffer zone should be the statutory forest area to ensure that FE are not the only stakeholders and that there is some involvement and commitment from the non-government sector. Would like to see the NGOs getting more involved.

RSPB: supportive in principle and for Nags Head the condition of the SSSI should be upgraded to Unfavourable Recovering. A little reticent due to the issues over Cannop Ponds. Also would be interested to include Highnam Woods. Would be interested in the impacts outside of RSPB holdings.

Gloucestershire County Council: No response yet to emails.

Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership: Still awaiting a response to the email.

- https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/files/ugd/5c4a64_3cba93bef96d4f0282bc138a3a65aac9.pdf
- <https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/our-board>

Wye Valley AONB: would like to understand the benefits to the AONB of the designation .

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust; positive support from the team but greater involvement in the design would be welcome

Severn Estuary Partnership: No reply as yet

- <https://www.severnestuarypartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/11/2017-2027-Severn-Estuary-Strategy.pdf>

Monmouthshire County Council: No replies

Herefordshire County Council: Contact made but the authority wanted a more detailed meeting to understand the implications and opportunities.

Stroud District Council: Emails and contacts made but no replies received

- <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/jobs-and-training/jobs-with-the-council/strategic-lead-nature-recovery-and-biodiversity>

South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority : Initial contact made but more detailed discussion needed to fully explore the opportunities and risks

- <https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/f54853f75ea58b123df6a8267fb8adbe/Strategic-GI-Corridor-A.pdf>
- [https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/9893e08eb090ba4fc703b1413122a987/Green Infrastructure Strategy 2021 summary document.pdf](https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/9893e08eb090ba4fc703b1413122a987/Green_Infrastructure_Strategy_2021_summary_document.pdf)
-

Natural Resources Wales: No reply

Wales Government; No reply to date

Conclusions

These options provide a framework for further discussion with other authorities and stakeholders in the area; none of them may be the final definitive configuration of the proposed UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The configuration can also be changed in future periodic reviews formally, but there is nothing to stop the nascent reserve operating with a porous boundary to share benefits with neighbouring areas that can ultimately be a formal extension of the reserve.

Suggested next steps:

1. Review the core areas and rationalise according to their significance, condition and potential for engaging the local community.
2. Carry out a quick review of how the designation can support or improve the local plan and economic strategy for FODD. An illustration of the kinds of investment ideas for the area will aid the discussion; these may include:
 - Local processing of goods to shorten supply chains but also bring added value into the area; these may include coppice produce, timber frame building units manufacture, forest waste arisings use,
 - specialised local produce from horticulture, viticulture.
 - localised housing energy efficiency retrofit,
 - transitioning to future-proof manufacturing in the area,
 - development of key economic sites such as Lydney Harbour, Five Acres and the Cinderford Norther Quarter. Such developments can be flagship projects for demonstrating best practice in sustainable regeneration in net zero design and operation.
3. Communication and engagement with stakeholders in neighbouring areas and in the Forest of Dean District.

The communication strategy needs to address the concerns raised by some of the stakeholders and increase the level of understanding of the potential of the designation. In other areas the terminology for the zones has been altered slightly to make it less technocratic. For example the buffers have been described as support zones because they play a key role in extending the functionality and protection of the core areas and transition areas as cooperation zones which emphasises the voluntary nature and opportunity for working in partnership for shared improved outcomes. Provided the terms used translate transparently back to what is required in the nomination document it should not provide a problem.

It will be important to engage and have the support of the strategic stakeholders first through a range of workshops and meetings. Use the document to engage with some of the authorities in adjacent areas in more depth; e.g. Monmouthshire, Welsh Government, South Gloucestershire Authority, Stroud District Council, etc

These can then be followed up and ideally supported or even promoted by those strategic stakeholders.

The emphasis should be on co-creation of the designation rather than imposed from above. Therefore the principles need to translate when it comes to the community consultation. The work that was done for the Fen Country was exemplary and it will be worth looking at their process and emulating some of the practices that were taken there.

A proto governance model can then be established with a managing partnership which will then take responsibility for the development of the strategy and signing off the nomination dossier with all relevant signatures.

Gantt chart for nomination process

Gantt

