

SUBJECT: MARCHES FORWARD PARTNERSHIP

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 21st of MAY 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update on the collaborative “Marches Forward Partnership” with neighbouring local authorities, Herefordshire Council, Powys County Council and Shropshire Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet approves:

- 2.1 The Marches Proposition - *Appendix One*, as the agreed vision and collective ambition for the Marches Forward Partnership.
- 2.2 The establishment of light touch governance arrangements, through the establishment of a Partnership Board, set out in *Appendix Two* of the Marches Proposition as a basis for collective delivery and resourcing. The Partnership will focus on the immediate delivery of agreed priorities around environment, health, transport and food production.
- 2.3 An evaluation of the Partnership’s progress in twelve months’ time, to satisfy itself of the Partnership’s ability to move from concept to delivery and offer longer term, tangible benefits to the County.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 In September 2023, [Cabinet](#) approved the establishment of the Marches Forward Partnership with neighbouring local authorities and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to reflect the spirit of cooperation and establishment of a flexible umbrella framework for joint working. The framework supports local service delivery based around how people and place’s function, rather than being confined within organisational or geographical boundaries.
- 3.2 Since the approval of the MOU, the Councils have been working with partners and independent think tanks, to develop the Marches Proposition. This sets out evidence, a joint vision and working arrangements for Marches Forward. Full details of activities to date can be found in Appendix Three.
- 3.3 The work has rightly involved various iterations, as priorities and programmes have evolved to take on board evidence and input from stakeholders alongside government officials post the general election and recent budget announcements. The Marches Proposition therefore provides the most up to date response on how the Marches region can drive growth and prosperity between England and Wales.
- 3.4 Whilst the Proposition focuses on the vision and long term added value to the cross-border Marches communities, there is a need to ensure targeted resourcing on

delivery. The following three immediate priorities have therefore been identified as follows with the corresponding Priority Programmes of work:

3.4.1 A High Productivity Rural, Small Town and City-based economy

Marches Good Food Movement - a rural innovation region, leading food production for the nation, growing the food sector and supporting future adaptation techniques and land management opportunities.

3.4.2 A Green Economy Trailblazer Region

Marches Environmental Investment and Innovation Platform - to establish a platform which utilises the unique environmental assets of the region to drive large scale private sector investment.

3.4.3 Healthy and Connected Places

Marches Health Group - to pilot early intervention health inequalities initiatives, working with health partners to take a whole systems approach to health prevention.

Marches Connect Transport Group - to create an equitable and connected cross border transport system which supports movement between the union and reforms services, providing a coherent and integrated rural transport approach.

3.5 The proposed establishment of a simple governance structure, based around a quarterly Partnership Board, reflects the agile, strategic and voluntary nature of the partnership and will enable focused progress in a resource light and non-bureaucratic approach.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 The positive impacts of this proposal are as follows; a full assessment can be found in *Appendix Four* - Integrated Impact Assessment:

- Four local authorities working together to establish areas where there is mutual benefit and added value.
- The rural economy and green growth are at the top of the agenda.
- Areas of cross border shared interests include food, environment, health and transport alongside skills, housing, energy, climate change and digital connectivity.
- The Partnership provides an opportunity to join forces to apply for funding from government on major projects that will benefit the collective region.
- It is anticipated that the planned collaboration and the council's willingness to work together will increase overall government investment, potentially unlocking millions of pounds for identified initiatives.

4.2 There are no negative impacts associated with this proposal.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 Significant opportunity is provided by the Marches Forward Partnership as a flexible umbrella framework for joint working which supports local service delivery. It is based around how people and places function rather than being confined within organisational or geographical boundaries. It also enables the Council to harness the unique value of Monmouthshire's cross border location.

- 5.2 The Partnership is not a legal entity. There will be no formal governance but a simple structure that reflects the agile, strategic and voluntary nature of the partnership. The proposed Partnership Board will have responsibility for focusing shared resources on agreed priority areas to ensure targeted delivery over the short, medium and longer term. As a result, there are no legal risks, since the Partnership will operate on an informal basis, based around joint working on areas of common purpose.
- 5.3 Mapping has been undertaken to understand existing strategic partnership arrangements across the area. Engagement has also taken place with both Governments to understand emerging policy under the English Devolution White Paper and review of Corporate Joint Committees. As the Marches Proposition seeks to respond to an existing gap in strategic cross border working between England and Wales it does not pose a risk in terms of duplicating existing or emerging arrangements. Instead, the Marches Proposition focuses only on areas of cross border added value and opportunity.
- 5.4 As a flexible arrangement, each Local Authority within the Partnership has the freedom to either not undertake a particular activity or not participate further in the Partnership at any point in time. The Partnership does not therefore pose a risk in terms of prejudicing or constraining any of the constituent partners or groupings of partners in being involved in alternative partnership arrangements. The informal governance arrangements will not restrict, in any way, other arrangements that a partner local authority may wish to develop independently.
- 5.5 The risks and opportunities relating to this report are predominately focused on progressing the associated working arrangements to support delivery. Whilst this poses resource implications, the proposed way of working is aimed at progressing in a resource light and non-bureaucratic approach. In addition, the Marches Proposition provides evidence led basis to seek a £1.5m capacity funding grant from Central and Welsh Government.

6. REASONS

- 6.1 Following Cabinet approval of the MOU the Marches Forward Partnership officially launched on the 10th of November 2023 with the signing of a high-level Memorandum of Understanding between the four local authorities. Since then, a significant amount of activity has taken place which can be found in *Appendix Three – Marches Forward Activity to date*.
- 6.2 Across the partner local authorities, the Marches Forward Partnership' provides an opportunity to:
- Focus on the shared geography and identify opportunities to maximise the potential of the cross-border area.
 - Understand and work together to attract the right investment, for example for critical infrastructure.
 - Understand and innovate to address the needs of rural communities.
 - Harness the value of shared rural assets.
 - Align policy and investment drivers to obtain the best from cross border political ambitions.
 - Understand future trends and service demands across a functional area.
 - Focus on where collaboration adds the greatest value.
 - Share learning and best practice.

- 6.3 The Marches Proposition summarises the vision and opportunity provided by the Marches Forward Partnership. It has been reviewed and shaped by independent think tanks to provide the technical assurance on how the cross-border collaboration between England and Wales provides the greatest value. The proposition takes on board the latest policy steer from government post-election and post budget announcement and provides a phased approach to delivery which recognises the constraint on existing resources.
- 6.4 The establishment of a quarterly Partnership Board will enable joint development with key partners in relation to the delivery of the Partnership's agreed outcomes. This informal governance structure will support the continuation of a flexible approach to joint working, targeting resources at priority areas of joint delivery.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Marches Proposition provides clarity on the scale of activities and priorities to accelerate. It supports the Local Authority's ability to position the Marches region and seek wider and more innovative opportunities to unlock new funding into the area. It also helps to apply collective resources to deliver greater value for money across the Marches area.
- 7.2 The partner Local Authorities have already pooled funds to commission feasibility studies and support shared resourcing. Each Local Authority Partner has contributed circa £100,000. Monmouthshire County Council's contribution to date has been £95,627 which was funded via UK SPF, and used to support appointment of the Programme Manager, a Tourism Feasibility Study and various communication and events activities including the Launch Event [Marches Forward Partnership Launch event](#), development of the [Marches Forward website](#) and associated press activities.
- 7.3 The establishment of a Partnership Board enables the continued prioritisation, agreement and apportionment of shared resources across the partner authorities, thereby reducing financial implications to each individual organisation. Therefore, Monmouthshire County Council's contribution for 2025/2026 will continue to be in the provision of Officer time to support the Partnership's activities, and an apportioned financial contribution equating to circa £61,553 or £54,053 without the contingency. This contribution will support the continuation of the Programme Manager role post September 2025, marketing activity and targeted programme development activities needed to access funding for delivery. These costs will be met from capitalisation direction in 2025/26, and thereafter will be allocated to service budgets, depending on the activity to be undertaken. This may require a budget pressure to be considered for the 2026/27 budget.
- 7.4 Each Local Authority will continue to have individual responsibility for relevant Cabinet and Council briefings. This will include ensuring all the necessary financial agreements are in place within each partner local authority for any key areas of work associated with the Partnership. Political leadership, through the Partnership Board, will ensure regular oversight and identify additional requirements for scrutiny and assurance in relation to specific deliverables.

8. CONSULTEES

Cabinet

Strategic Leadership Team

Local MPs and AMs

UK Government and Welsh Government colleagues

WLGA

CCR City and Deal colleagues

Infrastructure and Place Leadership Team

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix One – Memorandum of Understanding

Appendix Two – Partnership Board

Appendix Three – Marches Forward Activities to date

Appendix Four – Integrated Impact Assessment

10. AUTHORS:

Peter Davies – Assistant Chief Executive, Strategic Director for Resources, S151 Officer

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12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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Appendix One Marches Proposition



Marches Proposition-
January 2025 .docx

Appendix Two – Marches Partnership



Appendix 2 Marches
Partnership Governan

Appendix Three – Marches Forward Activity – September 2023 to January 2025

1. Initial Scoping and Establishment of Thematic Groups

1.1 In the early discussions of the Partnership, a review of each local authority plan and programme of strategic projects identified areas of alignment and common purpose. This review resulted in the identification of four themes for more detailed scoping:

- Nature, Energy and Climate Adaptation, led by Shropshire Council
- Health, Housing and Skills, led by Powys County Council
- Transport and Digital Connectivity, led by Herefordshire Council
- Food, Development and Visitor Economy, led by Monmouthshire County Council.

1.2 Between September- December 2023, the four thematic groups were tasked with exploring how the Partnership can best offer a flexible framework to deliver local services and corporate priorities differently using shared skill sets. With an unusual level of freedom to innovate and look at creative solutions, not bound by statutory delivery timescales or regulatory frameworks, the focus of the thematic groups was on identifying those areas of added value.

1.3 In December 2023, this work was packaged into a focused work plan for detailed scoping:

Work Programme	Scoping Purpose
Nature, Energy and Climate	<i>A cross border Environmental Investment Zone</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ To recognise the shared current and future environmental challenges across the Marches area and harness our unique assets and trading potential, using the existing Enterprise Zone principles around designating areas to unlock investment and resources.○ Potential to accelerate through feasibility of an investment zone as part of a pilot for the upper Severn catchment aligned to Severn Valley Water Management Scheme.
	<i>Strategic Area Energy Planning</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ To drive investment and delivery in local carbon projects which help address our collective net zero ambitions.○ To scale up with Government support to provide green energy solutions and energy resilience for partner organisations.
	<i>A joint local authority approach to carbon insetting</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ To explore a joint approach to offsetting local authority capital investment programmes through a framework for carbon offsetting, which enables environmental benefits and betterment to be retained locally.

Health, Housing and Skills	<p><i>Scale up of housing delivery models</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To expand the existing local authority led housing across the Marches area. <p><i>Cross border health care services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To improve communications and planning for future services and housing development. Improved links regarding public health. <p><i>Sharing of skills strategies and priorities to include alignment of skills work</i></p> <p><i>Engagement across ICS Boards in particular around the use of digital</i></p> <p><i>Joint work to share plans and strategies and UKSPF priorities.</i></p> <p><i>Joint work to bring together health leads as a joint network to understand the unique detriments of rural health across the four counties.</i></p> <p><i>Shared understanding of rural health inequalities across the Marches corridor, to understand the impact of borders/travel for rural health.</i></p> <p><i>Mapping of Marches healthy and nutritious food initiatives.</i></p> <p><i>To identify opportunities to address health issues.</i></p> <p><i>Joint work to look at demand and capacity planning to understand the cross border flows with patients in different health systems.</i></p>
Transport and Digital Technology	<p><i>EV hub and nodes network</i> - To consider key locations and deliverability e.g., electricity supply.</p> <p><i>Cross Border Connects- Single ticketing framework</i> – To consider digital infrastructure needs to support single ticketing and framework to enable cross border delivery.</p> <p><i>Collaboration on highway contracts</i> - To explore innovative solutions around delivery vehicles for highway maintenance.</p> <p><i>Delivery of the River Severn Partnership Innovation Region</i> - To develop use case around digital technology in water management, agri-tech and public sector</p> <p><i>Information exchange on Local Transport Plan development and strategic highway schemes</i> – To demonstrate how our transport networks work to</p>

	complement each other and to ensure that our residents and businesses are not disadvantaged as they cross borders.
Food, Development and Visitor Economy	<p><i>Marches Market Town Revitalisation</i> - To identify the critical success factors of thriving Marches market towns to address and reduce High Street decline.</p> <p><i>Marches Good Food Movement/ Sustainable Food Networks</i> - To pilot an innovative approach, linking existing Sustainable Food Partnerships and identifying strategic commonalities to inspire the unique food culture of The Marches.</p> <p><i>Celebrate The Marches as a green, sustainable and accessible tourism destination for all</i> - To coordinate tourism activity with a medium-term ambition to consider the development of a Marches Destination Development Partnership.</p> <p><i>Celebrate the unique culture and heritage of The Marches</i> - To facilitate joint working through Cultural Compacts and Creative Clusters with a medium-term ambition to develop an ambitious cultural framework, events and marketing programme.</p>

2. Engagement Activities

- 2.1 A partner event in April 2024, enabled sense checking and wider shaping with key stakeholders, including investors, regulatory bodies and strategic delivery partners. A series of workshop sessions provided opportunity for detailed discussion on the thematic areas of focus and proposed priorities. It aided in providing confirmation on the key areas of opportunity and added value. The partner event was complemented by an all-member event, bringing together all local authority members across the four local authorities to discuss and share thinking on the work to date and providing local political leadership on the emerging areas of focus.
- 2.2 The outcomes from the partner and member events were further supported by a commission with the New Economics Foundation in summer 2024. This provided an independent and evidence led review of the work to date and an understanding of the unique assets and functional geography of the Marches region.
- 2.3 In September 2024, the New Economics Foundation provided an early draft of the Marches Proposition. This included a revised focus on three outcomes, rather than the four generic themes, emphasising what the Partnership can uniquely seek to drive as areas of comparative advantage and unique opportunity:
 - **A high productivity Rural, Town and City-based economy**
 - **A green economy trailblazer region**
 - **Health and connected places.**
- 2.4 A Leader led workshop in October 2024, provided a refocus on four immediate priorities to achieve these three agreed outcomes:

A High Productivity Rural, Town and City Based Economy

- Marches Good Food Movement – development of a regional model and innovative pilot linking together local food partnerships with the Marches reputation as a food and drink destination with good food culture.

A Green Economy Trailblazer Region

- Marches Environmental Investment and Innovation Platform (MEIP) – development of a pioneering place based green finance scheme (both domestically and internationally) utilising our national award-winning River Severn Partnership, to leverage public and private capital, respond to key environmental challenges such as water quality, flood risk and water resource management and unlock the Marches as a leader in green growth.

Healthy and Connected Places

- Marches Health Group - piloting an early intervention and prevention health inequalities programme.
- Marches Connect Transport Group – creation of an equitable and connected cross border transport system which supports movement between the union and reforms services, providing a coherent and integrated rural transport approach.

3. Development of the Marches Proposition

- 3.1 Whilst these provide the initial agreed focus, the Marches Proposition does set out the longer-term vision and wider areas of opportunity should wider funding to resource them become available. These longer-term opportunities include:

Marches Innovation and Knowledge Network

- Development of a Marches hub and spoke model of innovation and technology skill centres, utilising existing FE expertise and sectoral strengths. The Marches Model will reset skills for the future economy, growing the skills base and addressing low wages, by developing the region as a centre of excellence for climate adaptation and fairer pay.

Marches Affordable Market Towns

- Establishing an evergreen investment housing loan fund, to catalyse and scale up affordable housing opportunities, to ensure delivery of the Government's new housing targets for our region, for key workers in growth sectors using an existing delivery model.

Marches Strategic Energy Plan

- Working with Great British Energy on the development of a cross-border energy masterplan to drive resilient energy systems.
- **March The Marches**
Utilizing Offa's Dyke as the cultural spine of the region, linking and building on the Marches market towns, historic assets, landscape, rivers and canals. This

will open accessibility to all, creating a connected tourism offer to walk in the history and natural beauty of the Marches region.

4. Delivery and Achievements over the last 12 months

- 4.1 Whilst the main focus of work has been on the evidence base and partner engagement to develop a robust programme of joint delivery, the Partnership has already sought to maximise value from the outset:

A high productivity city, town and rural based economy

- Feasibility work to establish a Centre of Excellence for Living with Climate Change (CLiCC) has commenced with the University of Chester. This is exploring the academic offer for green skills development and whilst initially linked to a programme of water management infrastructure (Severn Valley Water Management Scheme) has been aligned to the wider Marches Innovation and Knowledge Network to explore opportunity to take forward as an initial pilot for expansion into a wider hub and spoke network of skill centres.
- A Homes England facilitated workshop on housing and market towns regeneration has taken place to help identify the key areas of opportunity across the Marches.
- A Marches Good Food Movement Proposal has been developed in partnership with all food partnerships across the Marches and has been shared with funders (Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the National Lottery) with a £1.2million ask for a 3-year project. Work has also taken place to align with wider activity across the Marches on farm clusters to explore and identify sustainable farming funding opportunities.

A green economy trailblazer region

- Feasibility work is in the process of being commissioned for the 'March the Marches' tourism programme with recommendations from this report expected by March 25.
- Joint work has been undertaken with energy providers to agree the scope for a Marches Energy Plan.
- An initial design framework is now in place for the Marches Environmental Investment Platform (MEIP). Work has been undertaken to test this design with key local and national stakeholders including private sector investors and local landowners and ENGOs. Alignment has been made to the funding and finance work of the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme as a potential pilot for the MEIP. A proposal is also in development to take the MEIP forward as a second phase to the River Severn Partnership Advanced Wireless Innovation Region, scaling up work with landowners on piloting digital technology and water management and exploring opportunities through the MEIP to unlock longer term investment. This innovative work has recently been shared with both the National Infrastructure Commission and the National Infrastructure Commission Wales.

Healthy and connected places

- A health subgroup has been established to bring together cross border health partners with joint mapping of strategies and evidence bases underway.
- Joint work between health partners and the Precision Health Initiative (University of Cambridge) has commenced to understand opportunity for a pilot bringing together primary and secondary health prevention work. This could include an initial 3-year R&D

phase fully funded by the Precision Health Initiative to establish case studies in support of a longer-term Priority Health Outcomes Fund.

- 4.2 In addition, a dedicated Programme Lead for the Marches Forward Partnership has been appointed on a 12month contract to aid focus on immediate delivery.
- 4.3 Proactive engagement with the National Wealth Fund (NWF) has also led to the signing of an agreement between Shropshire Council and the NWF on behalf of the Marches Forward Partnership. This will provide the Partnership with dedicated advisory support on the Marches project pipeline to inform the delivery programme with a focus on the private sector market and helping to unlock investment opportunities.

5. Engagement and Governance

- 5.1 Ongoing engagement with both Welsh and UK Government has taken place throughout the formative stage of the Partnership. A detailed joint discussion with the Deputy Director for MHCLG and Deputy Director, Wales for MHCLG in August offered clear support for the Partnership and ambition to work over larger spatial areas. The Partnership was seen as an important means by which to consider future service delivery and design in support of growth. However, clarity was sought on the governance model for the Partnership and how this would work in practice in relation to existing legislation.
- 5.2 The development of the Marches Proposition has therefore included a separate focused commission with independent consultants, Metro Dynamics. This sets out the options for an appropriate democratic model which meets the needs of the Partnership and what the partner organisations collectively want to achieve.
- 5.3 The recommended governance structure has been included within the Marches Proposition to provide clarity on both the vision and working structure. The Marches Proposition therefore provides a robust basis for engagement activity with government officials and wider stakeholders on how the region will drive economic growth and prosperity across the England Wales border.
- 5.4 Whilst the overarching Partnership will progress, in the first instance, on an informal basis, some of the specific programmes of work within the Partnership will require their own more formal arrangements to support implementation.

Appendix Four



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Integrated Impact Assessment document (incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio-Economic Duty)

Name of the Officer completing the evaluation Cath Fallon Phone no: 07557 190969 Email: cathfallon@monmouthshire.gov.uk	Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal To seek approval from Cabinet for The Marches Proposition - Appendix One, as the agreed vision and collective ambition for the Marches Forward Partnership and the establishment of light touch governance arrangements, through the establishment of a Partnership Board, set out in Appendix Two of the Marches Proposition as a basis for collective delivery and resourcing.
Name of Service area Learning, Skills and Economy	Date 7 th May 2025

1. **Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics?** Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	This proposal seeks to have a positive impact on the county's residents, by working in partnership to tackle cross border shared interests and boost investment into the region.	None	None
Disability	As above	As above	As above

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Gender reassignment	As above	As above	As above
Marriage or civil partnership	As above	As above	As above
Pregnancy or maternity	As above	As above	As above
Race	As above	As above	As above
Religion or Belief	As above	As above	As above
Sex	As above	As above	As above
Sexual Orientation	As above	As above	As above

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice	<p>The Partnership provides a flexible umbrella framework for joint working which supports local service delivery based around how people and place's function, rather than being confined within organisational or geographical boundaries.</p> <p>The Partnership will seek to reduce barriers to service delivery, benefiting those experiencing socio economic disadvantage.</p>	<p>There are no negative impacts associated with this proposal.</p>	<p>The four authorities will work together to establish areas where there is mutual benefit and added value.</p>

3. Policy making and the Welsh language.

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
Policy Making Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably	Neutral impact Where possible, the Council will work with its neighbouring Welsh Authority, Powys, to promote the Welsh language as part of this cross-border initiative. We will ensure that any material produced by members of the partnership is compliant with the Welsh Language Standards applying to that organisation.	None	N/A
Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce	Neutral impact. This proposal does not involve the appointment of staff. However, on a general basis, the Learning, Skills and Economy Directorate encourages the appointment of Welsh Language speakers and offers staff Welsh Language training	None	N/A

Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	Neutral impact	None	We will ensure that any material produced by members of the partnership is compliant with the Welsh Language Standards applying to that organisation.
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4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!



Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	<p>Positive: Positively contributes to the Council's requirement to take a financially responsible approach to its use of resources, to ensure that it meets the needs of its citizens in the most cost-effective way. This includes continuing to bid for funding programmes that have been introduced following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, sharing best practices and supporting the financial resilience of services through joint working initiatives like this one.</p> <p>In addition, Partners will undertake activities which will seek to understand and articulate the needs of existing and prospective employers to improve the ability for learning,</p>	It is an on-going priority for the Council to work collaboratively to maximise efficiency and capitalise on opportunities.

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	<p>skills and business support provision across borders to meet demands.</p> <p>Negative: None identified</p>	
<p>A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g., climate change)</p>	<p>Positive:</p> <p>An immediate priority to position the Marches as a trailblazing region for green growth has already been identified. This highlights the opportunity to work together on strategic scale projects which address current and future resilience challenges in relation to climate change, water quality and nature recovery. The Partnership also supports rural resilience through work around land management and exploring common local authority aspirations around net zero and renewable energy solutions.</p> <p>Negative: None identified</p>	<p>The Marches Proposition and Partnership provides a significant opportunity for the partner local authorities to support one another on climate and net zero plans and local delivery.</p>
<p>A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized, and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>Positive: Partners are working together to identify opportunities for understanding cross border movements to access health provision and the infrastructure needed to support this.</p> <p>Negative: None identified</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities</p>	<p>Positive: Partners are working together on the development of sustainable</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	communities, creating a social infrastructure offer which realises the growth and sustainability of the rural economy and supports our residents, employers and users of our geography. Negative: None identified	
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	Positive: Partners are working together to identify and collaborate on strategic scale opportunities based around our high-quality natural environment, addressing current and future resilience challenges in relation to climate change and nature recovery. Negative: None identified	N/A.
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	Positive: Partners are working together to support a coherent cultural and visitor economy offer. Negative: None identified	N/A
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	Positive: Partners will be leveraging joint intelligence and research expertise to improve the quality of life for all our rural, cross border communities. Negative: None identified	N/A

5. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Long Term future</p> <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	<p>Whilst initially focused on short term opportunities for more efficient and effective service delivery, the Partnership also provides opportunity for constituent partners to seek and gain greater recognition of the need for joint working across borders with respective Governments.</p> <p>As such, it provides a platform to raise the profile of the area and seek greater investment for delivery in the future.</p>	
 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>The 'Marches Forward Partnership' brings together strategic joint working between Shropshire, Herefordshire, Powys and Monmouthshire local authorities.</p> <p>Its purpose is to work together to tackle cross border shared interests and boost investment into the region.</p>	N/A
 <p>Involvement</p> <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	<p>The Council is engaging with existing partners to make them aware of the opportunity and keep them informed of progress as the Partnership evolves.</p>	N/A

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<div data-bbox="197 336 400 539">  </div> <div data-bbox="230 549 367 576">Prevention</div> <div data-bbox="203 608 495 743"> Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse </div>	<p>The proposal is about strengthening and improving existing services, providing opportunities to explore areas of collective interest and ambitions to bring together both Welsh and English Governments to support, in principle, joint working across borders and enable efficiencies.</p>	
<div data-bbox="197 778 400 981">  </div> <div data-bbox="230 1000 376 1027">Integration</div> <div data-bbox="203 1050 524 1185"> Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies </div>	<p>This strategic cross border Partnership will provide opportunity to support government ambitions around Union Connectivity, improving join up between England and Wales and helping to increase investment and accelerate delivery of key infrastructure projects which will aid sustainable development opportunities.</p>	N/A

6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities:
Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	N/A	None.	N/A
Corporate Parenting	N/A	None.	N/A

7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

The Marches Forward Partnership brings together strategic joint working between Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Powys and Shropshire local authorities. It covers a population of approximately 737,000 residents and covers an area of approximately 1,140,000 hectares.

This strategic cross border Partnership will provide opportunity to support government ambitions around Union Connectivity, improving join up between England and Wales and helping to increase investment and accelerate delivery of key infrastructure projects.

Early scoping work has highlighted the potential to innovate and look at creative solutions which are not bound by statutory delivery timescales or regulatory frameworks. The Partnership offers a flexible framework to explore how local services, and corporate priorities can be delivered differently using shared skill sets and an unusual level of freedom.

8. **SUMMARY:** As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

. This section should summarise the key issues arising from the evaluation. This summary must be included in the Committee report template

Positive -

The positive impacts of this proposal are:

- Four local authorities are working together to establish areas where there is mutual benefit and added value.
- The rural economy and green growth are at the top of the agenda.
- Areas of cross border shared interests include food, environment, health and transport alongside skills, housing, energy, climate change and digital connectivity.
- The Partnership provide an opportunity to join forces to apply for funding from government on major projects that will benefit the collective region.
- It is anticipated that the planned collaboration and the council's willingness to work together will increase overall government investment, potentially unlocking millions of pounds for identified initiatives.
- We will assess the impact of any subsequent decision of the partnership, which requires it, in line with the relevant legislation that applies to that organisation.

Negative

None identified.

9. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
Progress the proposal	On-going.	Strategic Director for Learning, Skills and Economy
Consider and plan next steps and responsibilities.	On going	Strategic Director for Learning, Skills and Economy

10. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision-making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built-in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1.	SLT/Cabinet Members	July 2023	Give more consideration to understanding the cross-border movements to access health provision and the infrastructure needed to support this.
2.	Cabinet Report	September 2023	Approval of the establishment of the Marches Forward Partnership with neighbouring local authorities and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to reflect the spirit of cooperation and establishment of a flexible umbrella framework for joint working.
3	Cabinet Report	March 2025	Request Cabinet Approval of the Marches Proposition - as the agreed vision and collective ambition for the Marches Forward Partnership and the establishment of light touch governance arrangements, through the establishment of a Partnership Board, as a basis for collective delivery and resourcing.

