The background of the cover features a dynamic pattern of blue light trails that curve and flow across the page. Overlaid on this are several semi-transparent white squares of various sizes, some of which are arranged in a grid-like pattern, creating a modern, architectural feel.

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ECONOMICS • RESEARCH • ANALYSIS

A Business Plan for the Ribble
Coast and Wetlands Regional
Park

A Final Report by
Regeneris Consulting

Ribble Coast and Wetlands Partnership

A Business Plan for the Ribble Coast and Wetlands
Regional Park

May 2008

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Executive Summary

A Significant Opportunity

- i. The Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park presents the region with a significant economic opportunity. The area, which incorporates the Ribble Estuary and an inland area which takes in the Martin Mere and Mere Sands Wood nature reserves, is home to internationally significant wetland habitats and is nestled alongside three centres of population. However, the area has not, as yet, successfully reaped the full economic and social benefits which could be derived from the existence of this environmental asset.
- ii. This opportunity has been recognised by a number of organisations which have come together under the guise of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Partnership.
- iii. Regeneris Consulting has been commissioned to produce a five year business plan for the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Partnership. The purpose of this business plan is threefold:
 - 1) To articulate the role and activities of the Partnership;
 - 2) To clearly state the economic case for investment in the Regional Park; and
 - 3) To provide the Partnership with necessary practical detail to move forwards.

The key points set out in this business plan are summarised below.

An Ambitious Vision and Clearly Identified Priorities

- iv. An ambitious vision has been developed and agreed for the Regional Park. This is as follows:

“By 2020 the Ribble Coast and Wetlands will be an internationally recognised destination based on its environmental significance which will be conserved and enhanced”
- v. In realising this long term vision, a number of short to medium term priorities have been identified. These form the backbone of this business plan.
 - **Priority 1: Concept Promotion and Positioning** – In order to raise awareness, generate support, secure investment and promote the Regional Park concept to a wider audience, the Partnership will need to effectively sell the concept to an internal audience (i.e. those who will be instrumental in developing and delivering the Regional Park).
 - **Priority 2: Access and Infrastructure** – To enable the development of the Regional Park into a successful destination, it is imperative that the Park is relatively easy to get to and move around. Therefore, improving access and visitor infrastructure is to be an ongoing priority. The creation of a network of footpaths/towpaths/cycleways/bridleways and ensuring that these link to the Park’s gateways is a necessary first step, as is supporting the enhancement of the Park’s visitor gateways, most notably St Annes.
 - **Priority 3: Developing flagship attractions for the Regional Park** – The development of flagship attractions will be an effective means by which to bring more people into

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the Regional Park area (albeit in a managed way), to make the area distinctive and create a sense of place, and to widen the appeal of the area.

- **Priority 4: Raising Public Awareness** – Lastly, there is a need to raise awareness of the area and the attractions / amenities it offers to the local community, schools and visitors.

A Wide Range of Core Activities

vi. There are 17 activities which will form the focus of the Partnership’s work in the short to medium term. In each case, the Partnership’s role can be broadly described as either:

- **Delivery** - The partnership will directly deliver a number of ongoing activities, most notably around concept promotion and positioning.
- **Project initiation, support and facilitation** – The partnership will play a key role in developing those projects which are instrumental to the achievement of the Regional Park Vision.
- **Making links with existing activities** – The partnership will link in with and maximise the impact of existing activities / initiatives. There may also opportunities to attract new programmes and initiatives to the Regional Park area.

vii. This following diagram sets out the core activities for the Partnership, the way in which these align to the short to medium term priorities, and the anticipated role of the Partnership in each case.

Determining the Focus and Activities of the Partnership					
Priority Area	Concept Promotion and Positioning	Access and Infrastructure	Flagship Attractions	Raising Public Awareness	
				Community Engagement	Tourism Promotion
Core Activities	1. Comms Plan and implementation	4. Developing an access strategy	8. Douglas Crossing Bridge	14. Enhancing / expanding existing programmes	15. Resolve the issue of branding
	2. Ensure inclusion in key regional / local policy, plans and corporate documents	5. North West Coastal Trail	9. Public Arts Trail		16. Develop promotional material/web page
	3. Provide collective responses to new policy and development proposals	6. Route devt – Rufford Canal and Burscough to Banks	10. Regional Park Festival		17. Inclusion within partner promotional activity
Role	Deliver	Project initiation / support / facilitation		Making links with existing activity. This may also involve some delivery	

- viii. This programme of activity will require £350,000 in revenue funding over five years and a minimum of £15.7 million to deliver capital activities. At this stage cost information is both incomplete or outline. Therefore it is anticipated that this figure will increase.
- ix. In terms of the phasing, the relative importance of each of the priorities (and the activities therein) will shift over time. At the outset concept promotion and positioning will be a high priority to enable the Partnership to gain the necessary support to invest in developing the product. However, as the Park gains momentum and recognition, and investments are made in access networks, visitor infrastructure and attractions, the highest priority will then be to maximise community benefit and attract visitors.
- x. Over and above the projects listed in the diagram, there are a wider range of strategically important activities, which whilst not being directly facilitated by the Partnership, will significantly contribute towards the realisation of the Regional Park Vision. These include the **redevelopment of Preston Docks** and the development of **Brockholes Wetlands and Woodlands Nature Reserve**. Similarly, there are significant benefits to be realised from the **2012 Open** and the **transformation of Blackpool**.

An Evolving Partnership Structure

- xi. It will be imperative that the structure of the Partnership reflects the role set out above. The current Partnership structure consists of a Steering Group and two sub groups (namely the Marketing and Access Sub Groups). Groundwork acts as the accountable body. Whilst progress has been made and the current partnership structure has engaged with and brought on board a good range of partners, there is now a need to enhance these arrangements and ensure that they are fit for purpose. This business plan makes the following recommendations:
- **Recommendation 1: Develop (or revise) Terms of Reference (ToR) for each of the Partnerships constituent groups** which ensure that the roles and responsibilities clearly relate to the requirements of the core activities set out within this business plan. These ToRs should also establish the composition, level of delegated authority and reporting mechanisms for each group.
 - **Recommendation 2: Separating the strategic from the operational.** There needs to be an overarching Group which has a strategic focus. This could involve reconfiguring the existing Steering Group as a new Strategic Board. This would be smaller than the existing Steering Group and membership would reflect its strategic role [For consistency purposes this group continues to be referred to as the Steering Group throughout the remainder of this summary]. This group should be tasked with senior level advocacy, agreeing and signing off the annual business plan, monitoring progress against the business plan, signing off any significant elements of partnership activity and setting up sub groups. The sub groups provide the operational focus (working alongside any permanent staff). They should be formed to complete specific tasks as per this business plan. The remit and any significant deliverables must be signed off by the Steering Group. Membership of the sub-groups should reflect their purpose.
 - **Recommendation 3: Appoint a high profile chair to lead the Partnership.** The Steering Group should be led by a senior figure, possibly from the private sector. This individual would provide an important leadership and advocacy role for the

Regional Park.

- **Recommendation 4: Appointment of a Partnership Manager and part time secretarial support.** A full time manager will be important in progressing projects, undertaking core activities and in order to generate momentum. To support the Manager and the work of the Steering Group and Sub-Groups, administrative support is also required.

A Strong Economic and Social Case

xii. The delivery of this business plan and the achievement of the Vision will generate a range of socio-economic benefits which provide a strong case for investment. These can be quantified in the form of targets which are quantified as follows:

- Via the implementation of this business plan, the Partnership will support the development of **8-10** new, or existing assets within the Regional Park.
- The Partnership will increase exposure and awareness of the Regional Park via the publication of articles in local, national and trade press. Over the next five years it should seek to **reach an audience of two million people**.
- By 2020 there will be a 45 percent increase in visitor numbers. This equates to an **increase of 1.16 million visitors** from the 2005 figure of 2.6 million. Our research suggests that approximately **50%** of this growth can be accounted for by growth plans for existing visitor assets, or by the development of those activities which are set out in this business plan.
- The additional visitors to the Regional Park will generate **an additional £47.9 million in visitor expenditure** for the local economy. This will mean that visitor expenditure will have increased from £107m in 2005 to £154.9m by 2020.
- Increased visitor expenditure also supports employment within a local economy. It is estimated, based upon the assumption that 1FTE job is supported by every £60,000 of visitor expenditure, **an additional 800 direct FTE jobs** will be supported within the Regional Park.

xiii. There are also a wide range of less tangible benefits which would also result from investment in the Regional Park. Regional parks have the ability to enhance the liveability of locations and as such help to retain and attract skilled labour for the benefit of local and investing businesses. Therefore the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park will play an important role in helping Preston and the surrounding area to develop as a location for knowledge based workers. In terms of wider social benefits, the Regional Park will form an effective means by which to aid community cohesion, engender a greater sense of local pride, generate significant health and well-being benefits, and provide an educational resource.

Moving forwards

xiv. There are a series of immediate tasks (over the next 6 months) required to progress the actions set out within this business plan. These tasks can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Develop new terms of reference for the Partnership structure;
- 2) Establish the overarching strategic group and appoint a chair;

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- 3) Develop specifications for the Partnership Manager and administrative support;
 - 4) Secure necessary resources for posts;
 - 5) Recruit individuals for both positions; and
 - 6) Develop briefs for the Access Strategy and the Arts Trail Feasibility Study.
- xv. Over the short term (the subsequent 18 months), the Partnership will seek to establish its approach to branding and promotion, develop a communications plan and seek to secure the necessary funding for a number of its core activities.
- xvi. Over the medium term (the three years thereafter), the intention is to commence delivery of a number of the Partnerships capital activities.

1. Introduction

The Opportunity

- 1.1 The Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park incorporates the Ribble Estuary and, to the south, an inland area which is home to the Martin Mere and Mere Sands Wood nature reserves. The landscape is a patchwork of farmland, dunes, mudflats and marsh land, which provides one of the Britain's most important sites for migratory and breeding birds. The area is permeated by a network of inland waterways and roads which link the area's villages and towns including the classic seaside resorts of Southport, Lytham and St Annes. These resorts provide gateways into the Regional Park from both the north and the south. The area also nestles alongside Preston, a city which is currently undertaking an impressive programme of urban regeneration.
- 1.2 Whilst the Regional Park is home to some internationally significant wetland habitats and is positioned alongside three major centres of population, it has not, as yet, successfully reaped the full economic and social benefits which could be derived from the existence of this environmental asset. Consequently, the Ribble Coast and Wetlands presents the region with a significant opportunity. This has been recognised by a number of organisations which have come together under the guise of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Partnership. The challenge now is to realise this opportunity in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable way.

The Purpose and Application of this Document

- 1.3 Regeneris Consulting has been commissioned to produce a business plan for the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Partnership. The purpose of this business plan is threefold:
- 1) To articulate the role and activities of the Partnership – In other words to identify those activities and projects that partners should undertake collectively to encourage the development and ensure the success of the Regional Park;
 - 2) To clearly state the economic case for investment in the Regional Park. Where relevant, this should inform future funding applications; and
 - 3) To provide the Partnership with necessary practical detail to move forwards. This incorporates both process-based recommendations around governance and performance management, and implementation planning.
- 1.4 Whilst this business plan covers a five year period, we would recommend that this should be a rolling document. Many of the projects set out herein are long term in nature and are currently at a relatively early stage, with much of the detail to be developed. Therefore sections of this document should be updated on an annual basis to reflect the availability of project level information, and the inclusion of any new priorities and activities. Chapters 3, 4, 6 and 8 will need to be refreshed accordingly.
- 1.5 Table 1-1 sets out the way in which the remainder of this business plan is structured.

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Table 1-1 Structure of the Business Plan	
Section	Content
Chapter 2 Background, Vision and Objectives	This Chapter tracks the evolution of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park and sets out the agreed Vision and Strategic Objectives for the Park.
Chapter 3 Short to Medium Term Priorities	Based upon consultations undertaken as part of the business planning process, this chapter sets out the short to medium term priorities for the Regional Park.
Chapter 4 Core Activities	This chapter considers in detail the core activities for the Partnership.
Chapter 5 The Structure of the Partnership	Chapter 5 sets out the current structure of the Partnership and makes a series of recommendations for the future enhancement of this structure.
Chapter 6 Overall Investment Plan	This Chapter tables the total known investment required over the next five years to bring forward the activities set out within this business plan.
Chapter 7 The Economic Potential of the Regional Park	The Chapter clearly articulates the economic case for supporting the development of the Regional Park, setting out both the quantifiable targets and less tangible impacts.
Chapter 8 The Implementation Plan	Chapter 8 translates the core activities into a series of actions in the form of an Implementation Plan

2. Background, Vision and Objectives

The Genesis of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park

- 2.1 Over the past five years the development of regional parks has been promoted across the North West. Indeed no other English region has embraced the concept with the same enthusiasm and vigour. The appetite for supporting regional parks emerged from a series of study visits to several large scale European parks in the late 1990s from officers at the then newly formed NWDA. Partners saw at first hand the success of locations such as Emscher Park in North West Germany and sought to replicate this in the region.
- 2.2 The concept of regional parks was first recognised strategically in the 2003 Regional Economic Strategy (and remains an action area within the current 2006 version). Regional parks are also recognised within the planning framework as a spatial policy (namely EM4) within the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 2.3 Figure 2-1 sets out the definition and objectives for regional parks as conceived in both the Regional Economic Strategy and the draft Regional Spatial Strategy.

Figure 2-1: Regional Parks

NWDA describes regional parks as *imaginative, long term, environmental projects designed to deliver a substantial new recreational and environmental resource*¹. The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy expands upon this definition, setting out the overall objectives for regional parks as follows (pg 53):

- To deliver a major improvement in the provision of high quality, easily accessible recreation, leisure and sporting opportunities and sustainable tourism, appropriate to the character and environmental sensitivity of the area;
- To deliver major environmental quality improvement to aid regeneration and image and contribute towards mitigating the impacts of climate change;
- To result in significant increases in employment and business activity in leisure, sport and recreation; and
- To provide a mechanism for the conservation of the landscape close to where people live, its character, biodiversity and heritage assets.

Currently, there are five regional parks in the North West, namely Mersey Waterfront, East Lancashire, Weaver Valley, Ribble Coast and Wetlands and Wigan Greenheart. There are a further three regional parks proposed. These are Croal Irwell, Morecambe Bay and West Cumbria. Overlaying and linking the three coastal regional parks is the North West Coastal Trail. This will be developed in conjunction with the regional parks network.

- 2.4 Alongside the growing recognition and prominence of regional parks at a regional level, partners working in and around the Ribble Estuary were becoming increasingly aware that the area was under valued and under used. Moreover, there were likely to be significant ecological, social and economic benefits which could be harnessed via the ongoing conservation and enhancement of the landscape and the nationally and internationally important wildlife that resides there. This resonated with Agency's ideas around regional parks. Therefore in 2003, a number of partners came together and formed a Regional Park

¹ This definition was provided by the Agency in its written response to the Regional Spatial Strategy Examination in Public in November 2004.

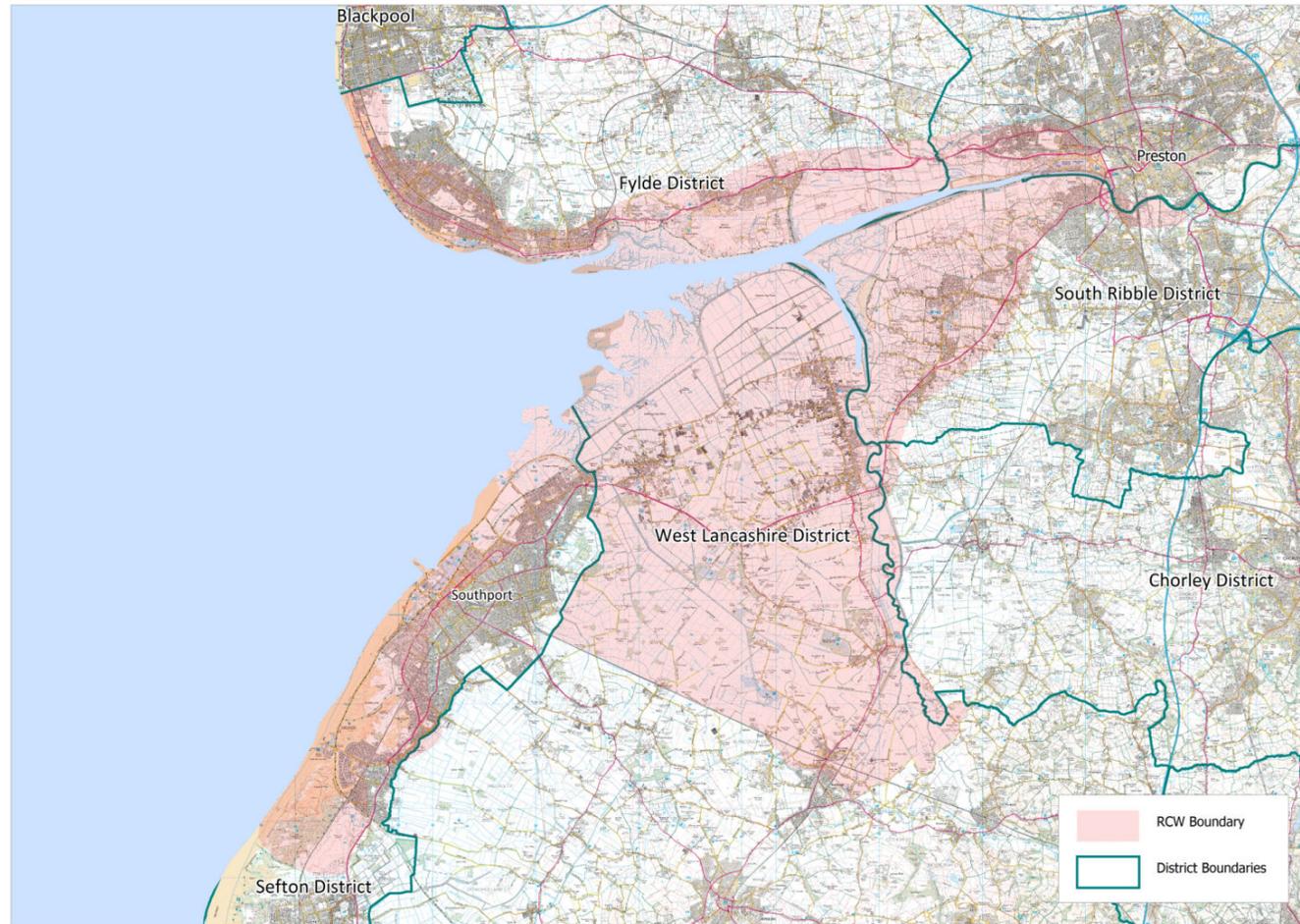
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Steering Group. This group commissioned a feasibility study for the Ribble Estuary Regional Park. This study sought to develop the concept, provide an overall framework to bring the concept to reality and act as a vehicle for funding bids. This feasibility study usefully constructed a physical and environmental baseline for the Regional Park, and articulated future proposals in the form of a masterplan and three integrated management plans. This study highlighted the area's strengths, which included its environmental assets and seaside resorts, and the area's weaknesses. These included access, the lack of an integrated approach, environmental sensitivity, and the seasonal and niche nature of the tourist offer.

- 2.5 Following the completion of the feasibility study the Steering Group took the decision to open out the Park's boundaries and include an area to the south of the Estuary which encompasses the West Lancashire Plain and is home to two significant nature-based visitor attractions namely Martin Mere and Mere Sands Wood. The name was subsequently changed from the Ribble Estuary to the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park. Figure 2-2 illustrates the current boundaries of the Regional Park.

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Figure 2-2: The Location and Boundary of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park



Note: The Regional Park as set out in the vision document. A recommendation is made in a later section of this business plan for further refinement of the boundary to bring it in line with the Mersey Waterfront Programme.

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- 2.6 With very little available resource the Steering Group sought to progress the concept. A Marketing Sub-Group was established, a Project Development Manager was appointed on a short term contract (which has now ended), an outline business plan was produced, a partnership agreement drafted (but has yet to be signed off), and an ambitious vision document was produced. The vision document articulated the importance of the Regional Park, and the opportunity it presents both locally and regionally. This was formerly launched at an event in March 2007.
- 2.7 Since the launch, the Steering Group has strived to push forward. Principally via its ongoing support for the Hesketh Outmarsh project, the continued development of a website for the Regional Park and the formation of a second sub group – the Access Sub Group. However, the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Partnership has now reached a point where it needs to consolidate the work done to date, further develop and agree its portfolio of activities and focus on securing the necessary resources to realise its vision. This business plan endeavours to support the Partnership in taking these steps.

Vision and Strategic Objectives

- 2.8 The Partnership has developed and agreed the following vision for the Regional Park:

“By 2020 the Ribble Coast and Wetlands will be an internationally recognised destination based on its environmental significance which will be conserved and enhanced”

This vision will be achieved via the pursuit of the following strategic objectives:

- 1) To **enhance and improve environmental quality** by conserving and protecting existing designated and non-designated natural assets within the Ribble Coast and Wetlands;
 - 2) To **improve access to and movement around the Ribble Coast and Wetlands**, by developing non vehicular routes and sustainable transport options to/from the Ribble Coast and Wetlands and from one asset to another;
 - 3) To **develop and promote the Ribble Coast and Wetlands as a destination for tourists**, by enhancing existing visitor facilities, constructing new flagship attractions and establishing links with neighbouring attractions and destinations.
 - 4) To **encourage participation and ownership by local communities** (residential, business and user/interest groups), through promotion, engagement and education.
- 2.9 The pursuit of these strategic objectives and the realisation of the vision will make a **significant contribution towards the unique proposition of Central Lancashire as ‘the city with room to breathe’**. In adopting this strap line, the Central Lancashire City Region Development Plan recognises the importance of the quality of place (and the natural environment therein) to enable economic growth. The plan highlights the need to invest in environmental assets, the development of gateways to these assets and green infrastructure more broadly. The **Lancashire Green Infrastructure Strategy**, currently in draft, is being developed to further steer such investments in the sub region. The Ribble Coast and Wetlands will provide an effective delivery mechanism to progress the strategic aspirations set out in both documents.

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- 2.10 As is implied by Strategic Objective Three, it will be important that the Ribble Coast and Wetlands both supports and derives benefit from neighbouring attractions, events and activities. To expand upon this, there are a number of significant opportunities, which must be considered in the pursuit of this objective. Most notably, these include the Golf Coast and the redevelopment of Blackpool.
- 2.11 Part of the North West coast is currently being promoted as the **Golf Coast**. It is home to 20 golf courses with the highest concentration of championship links golf anywhere in the world. Three of its courses, namely Lytham and St Annes, Birkdale, and Liverpool (at Hoylake) are amongst the UK's top 20 courses. The fact that the Golf Coast is hosting the Open Championships this year at the Royal Birkdale and in 2012 at the Royal Lytham and St Annes Golf Club bears testimony to its importance. The Golf Coast, as it is promoted, spatially overlays the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park. Indeed, the marketing of the Golf Coast and more specifically the hosting of the 2012 Open present the Ribble Coast and Wetlands with a significant opportunity. The event will attract media attention, project images of the North West globally and will attract visitors into the region. Therefore, the Ribble Coast and Wetlands can provide an important backdrop to the event. This, in turn, provides the Regional Park with an important promotional opportunity and an opportunity to attract day visitors to the area as part of their stay.
- 2.12 The long term vision for Blackpool is to reinvent the resort as a world class tourist destination. A 15 year regeneration plan, in the form of an ambitious 200 hectare masterplan, has been developed which will guide this transformation. The successful implementation of the masterplan is anticipated to lever in £2,200 million in private sector investment and create or safeguard 22,000 jobs. The Ribble Coast and Wetlands has the potential to add to the richness of Blackpool's offer (providing something which is very different to that which can be found in the resort itself). In turn the Ribble Coast and Wetlands can seek to benefit from the town's transformation, attracting day trippers (with the potential to extend length of stay or encourage repeat visits).
- 2.13 Those opportunities presented above must inform the development activities against these strategic objectives. They present partners with a means by which to maximise the potential of Ribble Coast and Wetlands as a visitor destination.
- 2.14 The following sections of this business plan focus upon the way in which the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Partnership can pursue these strategic objectives and move towards this vision over the next five years.

3. Short to Medium Term Priorities

Introduction

- 3.1 The previous chapter set out the long term vision and strategic objectives for the Regional Park. It is important that development of the Regional Park maintains this long term perspective as it does take time to initiate and develop activity, to influence visitor behaviour and wider perceptions of the area, and to witness the economic benefits. Collaborative work has been ongoing on Emscher Park for the last two decades and the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park has set its goals on a 15-20 year programme of transformation.
- 3.2 Nevertheless, there are inevitably a series of activities that are required in the short to medium term to put in place the mechanisms for collaborative working, to secure the necessary support (both financial and otherwise) and to lay down the foundations for the future development and evolution of the Regional Park. The identification of such short to medium term priorities in the case of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands forms the focus of this chapter.

Identifying the Short to Medium Term Priorities

- 3.3 In formulating this business plan, consultations have been undertaken with each of the key partners to establish their views on the short to medium term priorities for the Regional Park. Alongside this, the process via which other regional parks have been established has also been considered by way of context. The latter has provided some important pointers as to the necessary first steps. Where relevant, these are highlighted below.
- 3.4 Four priorities have been identified which represent those consistently raised by partners and subsequently signed off by the Steering Group. These priorities clearly align to several of the Strategic Objectives and a number were flagged within the earlier feasibility study produced by Gillespies and Amion in 2003.
- **Priority 1: Concept Promotion and Positioning** - It is clear from the consultations that there are varying levels of awareness and understanding of the Regional Park beyond those individuals involved in the Partnership. Moreover, securing the necessary revenue and capital investment required to develop the Regional Park is likely to be one of the greatest challenges faced by the Partnership. Therefore, in order to raise awareness, generate support, secure investment and promote the Regional Park to a wider audience, the Partnership will need to effectively sell the concept to an internal audience (i.e. those who will be instrumental in developing and delivering the Regional Park). This internal audience should initially include local politicians and senior decision makers, key officers and field staff. Over time, however, the Partnership will also need to consider how the Regional Park is promoted to land owners and local businesses (i.e. those who shape and generate an income from the visitor economy). Accommodation providers are particularly important within this category and the Partnership could work with the Tourist Board to position the concept and the improvements required. This priority draws

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upon the experience of other parks, as concept promotion and positioning featured highly on the agendas of Mersey Waterfont and the River Nene Regional Park at their inception.

- **Priority 2: Access and Infrastructure** –To enable the development of the Regional Park into a successful destination, it is imperative that the park is relatively easy to get to and move around. However, access was highlighted as being a weakness of the Regional Park in the 2003 feasibility study. Therefore, during the consultation process, partners emphasised that improving access and visitor infrastructure must be an ongoing priority. The creation of a network of footpaths/towpaths /cycleways/bridleways and ensuring that these link to the Park’s gateways is a necessary first step, as is supporting the enhancement of the Park’s visitor gateways, most notably St Annes. The town is in the process of transforming itself in order to realise its full potential and maximise the economic benefits which will generated by the 2012 Open Championships. Drawing upon experiences from elsewhere, improving access was one of the very important first steps taken by the North Norfolk AONB, an area which is deemed by partners as comparable with the Ribble Coast and Wetlands.
- **Priority 3: Developing flagship attractions for the Regional Park** – The development of flagship attractions is seen by partners as an effective means by which to bring more people into the Regional Park area (albeit in a managed way), to make the area distinctive and create a sense of place, and to widen the appeal of the area. This would also serve to demonstrate good progress with respect to the Regional Park concept. A similar approach has been adopted by the River Nene Regional Park, where the pursuit of flagship or landmark projects is central to the strategy to develop the Park in the short to medium term.
- **Priority 4: Raising Public Awareness** – Lastly, partners highlighted there is a need to raise awareness of the area and the attractions / amenities it offers to the local community, schools and visitors. This is ultimately the purpose of developing a regional park (i.e. to generate both social and economic benefit). Raising awareness and promoting usage should be central to the remit of all those responsible for developing / managing regional parks.

3.5 The need to address these priorities has underpinned the selection of activities which are to be taken forwards by the Partnership over the next five years. This is explained in the following chapter. However, these priorities are likely to change as projects are delivered and new opportunities come on-stream. Consequently, this section should be revisited on an annual basis as part of updating the business plan.

4. Core Activities

Introduction

- 4.1 The purpose of this chapter is to consider in detail the core activities for the Partnership. These flow directly from the short to medium term priorities identified in Chapter 3. The first section of this chapter introduces both the activities and role of the partnership in relation to these priorities. The remainder of this chapter then considers each activity in turn under the priority headings.
- 4.2 Please note that Regeneris Consulting has not sought to verify any of the costs herein. A number of the core activities are at a relatively nascent stage with only limited or high level information available (particularly with respect to costs and implementation). Therefore the figures and timescales should be approached with caution and updated annually.

Identifying Partnership Activities

- 4.3 Figure 4-1 sets out the core activities for the Partnership, the way in which these align to the agreed short to medium term priorities, and the anticipated role of the Partnership. For the purpose of this diagram Priority 4 (Raising Public Awareness) has been separated out into its constituent parts: community engagement and tourism promotion.

Figure 4-1: Determining the Focus and Activities of the Partnership

Priority Area	Concept Promotion and Positioning	Access and Infrastructure	Flagship Attractions	Raising Public Awareness	
				Community Engagement	Tourism Promotion
Core Activities	1. Comms Plan and implementation	4. Developing an access strategy	8. Douglas Crossing Bridge	14. Enhancing / expanding existing programmes	15. Resolve the issue of branding
	2. <i>Ensure inclusion in key regional / local policy, plans and corporate documents</i>	5. <i>North West Coastal Trail</i>	9. Public Arts Trail		16. Develop promotional material/web page
	3. <i>Provide collective responses to new policy and development proposals</i>	6. <i>Route devt – Rufford Canal and Burscough to Banks</i>	10. Regional Park Festival		17. Inclusion within partner promotional activity
Role	Deliver	Project initiation / support / facilitation		Making links with existing activity. This may also involve some delivery	

Please note: those activities and projects in italics will be integral to the implementation of the overarching Communication Plan or Access Strategy. However, these activities should also be undertaken in parallel. The rationale for this is set out in the following section.

4.4 Figure 4-1 identifies 17 activities which will form the focus of the Partnership’s work. This is not a comprehensive list of everything which is taking place or is important to the development of the Regional Park. Over and above those activities set out in Figure 4-1 there are a wider range of **strategically important activities**, which will significantly contribute towards the realisation of the Regional Park Vision. These include, for example, the **redevelopment of Preston Docks** and the development of **Brockholes Wetlands and Woodlands Nature Reserve**. However, those core activities highlighted above represent where, in practical terms, the partnership can play a relatively significant role and add most value.

4.5 The Partnership’s role with respect to the core activities can be broadly grouped under three headings:

- **Delivery** - The Partnership will directly deliver a number of ongoing activities, most notably around concept promotion and positioning.
- **Project initiation, support and facilitation** – The Partnership will play a key role in

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developing those projects which are instrumental to the achievement of the Regional Park vision. The specific role of the Partnership will vary according to the activity or project, but could involve identifying cross boundary opportunities, helping to secure the necessary project funding, acting in an advisory capacity; and potentially provide project management support. In this way, the Partnership will be in a position to initiate and promote joined up delivery of projects and programmes.

- **Making links with existing activities** – The Partnership will link in with and maximise the impact of existing activities / initiatives. There may also be opportunities to attract new programmes and initiatives to the Regional Park area.

4.6 Whilst this is a useful way to summarise the role of the Partnership, in reality its involvement is likely to vary in each case. Therefore, the following section considers each of these activities and the role of the Partnership in more detail.

4.7 As implied at the end of the last chapter, the relative importance of each of the priorities (and the activities therein) will shift over time. At the outset concept promotion and positioning will be a high priority to enable the Partnership to gain the necessary support to invest in developing the product. However, as the Park gains momentum and recognition, and investments are made in access networks, visitor infrastructure and attractions, the highest priority will then be to maximise community benefit and attract visitors. This evolutionary prioritisation should be kept in mind when updating the business plan in future years.

A Profile of Core Activity

4.8 In producing this business plan the distinction has been made between core revenue activities and capital based activity (i.e. investments in enhancing and/or creating assets for the Regional Park). A descriptive project outline is provided for the ongoing revenue based activity (and the costs are assumed to be integral to the operation of the Partnership). For capital based activities profiles have been constructed. These should be updated annually as projects are developed. Additionally these profiles may provide a useful proforma for reporting on progress to the Steering Group.

Priority 1: Concept Promotion and Positioning

Core Activities [Revenue]

4.9 This consists of three activities at this stage:

- 1) **The development and implementation of a Communication Plan** - This plan should set out the target audiences, the messages the Partnership wishes to convey, and the most effective means by which to do this. The focus could be on both internal audiences (i.e. those who will be instrumental in developing and delivering the Regional Park) and external audiences (i.e. those who would be targeted by the development of the website and partner promotional material). Awareness and media exposure is considered in more detail in Chapter 7. It is assumed at this stage that this plan will be developed by the Programme Manager in conjunction with the Marketing Sub Group. It should be signed off by the Steering Group prior to implementation.

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The following activities will sit within the Communications Plan. However, they should be also pursued in parallel to the plan's development as there may be missed opportunities should the partners hold back on undertaking these activities.

- 2) **Ensure inclusion in key regional / local policy documents, plans and corporate strategies** – It is the responsibility of members of the Steering Group to advocate the Regional Park and seek to ensure that activities and projects herein are included within their organisation's documentation. This is a particularly important task, as such documents will guide future investment and planning decisions. To support this task (and inform the Communication Plan) the Partnership should produce a schedule which sets out when documents are to be developed or reviewed. This can then be used to focus attention and highlight where it may be appropriate to arrange briefing meetings. This business plan and economic case should provide partners with a tool to communicate the role, priorities and impact of the Regional Park.
- 3) **Responding to consultations and development proposals** – The Partnership provides an effective forum to discuss those issues which stem from the need to manage the development of the Regional Park for recreation and visitors alongside conserving and enhancing wildlife habitats. This will be critical to the future success of the Regional Park and consequently, should inform a Partnership response to any public consultations / development proposals being brought forward.

Outcomes from Priority 1: These activities will seek to ensure that the Regional Park is widely recognised strategically as a priority and is operationally integrated with other relevant activity. Those responsible for making investment decisions will be fully aware of the benefits the Regional Park could generate. Those who work on the ground will be aware of the concept and the potential contribution they can make to the realisation these benefits.

Priority 2: Access and Infrastructure

North West Coastal Trail Concept Development

- 4.10 The **North West Coastal Trail** is a long distance trail which will hug the North West's coastline and will be accessible to walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The trail is at the concept stage. Whilst the intention is to combine a number of existing routes along the North West coast, the trail will also require some new route construction to effectively fill the gaps. To date a baseline route has not been established, therefore the work required and the cost is unknown. The right to coastal access and the development of a coastal trail around England have been included in the draft Marine Bill.
- 4.11 The Regional Park Network will be instrumental in the delivery of the trail and within the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park area it is clear that a crossing over the River Douglas will form an important component of this route.
- 4.12 The Douglas Crossing project is currently being progressed as part of the REMADE programme. However, given its centrality to the development of the trail and the clear synergies between the objectives of REMADE and the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park, the Douglas Crossing has been incorporated below as a flagship project within this business plan.

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4.13 More generally, the Partnership will need to ensure that it is fully engaged in and shapes the development of the trail. Moreover, future projects, where appropriate, should be embedded in future iterations of this business plan and delivered via the Partnership. This is likely to lead to the inclusion of a third route development project for the Southport to Preston Coastal Route. Ongoing communication and attendance at North West Coastal Trail meetings will be the first step to progress this.

Core Activities [Capital]

4.14 Set out in the following tables are those core activities to be taken forwards under Access and Infrastructure which are likely to require capital funding. In each case the role of the Partnership is highlighted. This is also fed into the implementation plan in the final chapter.

Activity: Developing an Access Strategy						
Description	This project involves commissioning external specialists to develop a comprehensive Access Strategy for the Regional Park area. It is anticipated that this will incorporate footpaths, towpaths, cycleways and bridleways. It will consider highways, water transport, and the public transport networks and will need to consider the implications of the forthcoming coastal access legislation as included within the draft Marine Bill. It could also consider electronic access to a number of the area's natural assets. This strategy will determine the necessary improvements and priorities for future investment within the Regional Park area. It is important that this ties in with and takes forward other ongoing strategy development (the North West Coastal Trail and the Green Infrastructure Strategy) and builds upon work undertaken to date (i.e. the Regional Park Feasibility Study).					
Lead Partner	Lancashire County Council					
Project Progress	The need for an Access Strategy has been agreed and signed off by the Steering Group via its inclusion within this business plan.					
Next Steps	The brief will be developed at the next Access Sub-Group meeting. This should be signed off by the Steering Group.					
Timetable	Development of brief – May/June 2008 Procurement of consultants will be subject to successfully securing funding for the project.					
Anticipated Costs	Costs are to be determined once a brief has been drafted. An approximate figure has been included at this stage, based upon discussions with specialist consultants.					
£'000	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total
Total	35					35
Funding	Potential sources include local authority partners.					
Partnership Actions	1) Develop and sign off the brief 2) Support in securing funding 3) Oversee the commission 4) Revisit Access and Infrastructure project priorities in light of the completed strategy 5) Incorporate any new projects via annual revision of business plan 6) Communicate findings to partners					

4.15 The following two projects will be integral to the Access Strategy. However, it is felt that strategy development should not slow their development. Therefore they are to be pursued in parallel.

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Activity: Route Development 1 Burscough to Banks						
Description	This project involves the development of a route which goes from the Burscough railway station through to the village of Banks on the estuary. The project can be broken down into four distinct sections: Section 1: Burscough railway station to Martin Mere – This involves the development of a footpath and signage. Section 2: Martin Mere to Windmill Animal Farm – This will involve the construction of a footpath across the Martin Mere Site. This will need to be carefully planned to ensure that it is not detrimental to habitats / wildlife. Section 3: along The Sluices on land to which the Environment Agency has rights – This is likely to be a bridleway. Section 4: is the remaining section of the route along The Sluice to Banks – similarly, it is hoped that this will be developed as a bridleway.					
Lead Partner(s)	Section 1: WWT, Lancashire County Council, Burscough Parish Council and Network Rail. Section 2: WWT and Lancashire County Council. Section 3: Environment Agency, WWT and Lancashire County Council. Section 4: Environment Agency, WWT and Lancashire County Council.					
Project Progress	Section 1: Initial discussions have been held amongst partner organisations (with the exception of Network Rail). Funding has yet to be secured and discussions outstanding with landowners. Section 2: Again initial discussions amongst partners. However, the future progress of the section is likely to be dependent upon Sections 3 and 4. Section 3: EA are looking at the possibility to develop this as a pilot for declaring opening access land. Feasibility work is currently being conducted by EA. Section 4: The potential for a route along The Sluices has been identified, but this has yet to be progressed beyond the ideas stage.					
Next Steps	Section 1: Obtain landowner consent. There is already a public right of way therefore do not anticipate that it will be an issue. Also need to secure funding. Section 2: Await progress on Section 3 and 4. Section 3: Awaiting outcome of Environment Agency feasibility work before identifying how to proceed. Section 4: Commission a feasibility study to be conducted for this section of the route. This would determine cost and the means by which to proceed					
Timetable	Section 1: Should be completed within the next 18 months. Section 2: to be developed in line with Sections 3 and 4, all of which could be completed within two and a half years. Section 4: a feasibility study to be commissioned within the next 12 months.					
Anticipated Costs	PLEASE NOTE: Costs included below are rough estimates and would be subject to more detailed cost planning. Where the cost is unknown, this will be determined by feasibility work.					
£'000	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total
Section 1	5					5
Section 2			2			2
Section 3			Unknown			Unknown
Section 4	3		Unknown			Unknown
Total	8		Unknown			Unknown
Funding	Potential sources of funding have yet to be discussed / explored.					
Principle Risks	The greatest risk relates to securing landowner agreement, particularly for Section 4 of the route and will require careful management and negotiations.					
Partnership Actions	1) Identify funding sources and, where appropriate, support in the development of funding applications					

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	2) Act in an advisory capacity (principally via the Access sub-group) 3) Ensure that the route development ties in with other projects (i.e the Public Arts Trail).
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Activity: Route Development 2 Rufford Branch						
Description	This is the development of a multi purpose route along the canal from Burscough up to and alongside the River Douglas. The route can be broken into three sections: Section1: Burscough to Sollom Section 2: Sollom to A59 at Tarleton Section 3: A59 at Tarleton along the River Douglas					
Lead Partner	British Waterways, Lancashire County Council and West Lancashire District Council.					
Project Progress	Section 1: a funding application was submitted for £36,000 from SITA Landfill Tax Credits to improve a 1km stretch of the route. This section was chosen as it is in the poorest condition. However, this funding application was unsuccessful. Section 2: Currently there is no tow path or right of way and the land is in private ownership. No progress has been made at this stage. Section 3: Quality of the path is patchy. To date no steps have been taken to enhance this stretch of the route.					
Next Steps	Section 1: Identify other possible funding sources. Section 2: To proceed, a local user group needs to come forward with evidence to prove unhindered access to gain a public right of way. Only then could negotiations commence with landowners around developing the route. Section 3: Need to demonstrate the case for developing this section of the route. This is likely to involve both community consultation and consideration of the links with the NWCT. Only once the case can be clearly articulated can funding applications be constructed.					
Timetable	Section 1: Unknown until funding is secured. For Section 2 and Section 3 it is unknown at this stage.					
Anticipated Costs						
£'000	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total
Section 1		36				Unknown*
Section 2						Unknown
Section 3						Unknown
Total		36				
*The cost of upgrading a 1km stretch alongside Rufford Old Hall is estimated to be £36k. This is included within the Investment Plan. However, Section 1 is 9km in length. At this stage, the full cost is not known.						
Funding	Yet to be determined					
Principle Risks	Perhaps the greatest risk is in securing a public right of way for Section 2 of the route. This is necessary before any route development can go ahead. Successfully making the case to funding bodies is another significant risk.					
Partnership Actions	1) In the case of Section 3 look at the case for development. and the way in which the route development ties in with other projects (i.e NWCT and the Public Arts Trail) 2) Identify funding sources and, where appropriate, support in the development of funding applications. 3) Act in an advisory capacity (principally via the Access sub-group).					

4.16 Gateway development is an important component in the evolution of the Ribble Coast and

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Wetlands Regional Park. St Annes is included as a short to medium term priority. However, later iterations of this business plan may need to consider the inclusion of other gateway projects, especially those to the south and east of the Regional Park.

Activity: Gateway development – St Annes						
Description	<p>The resort of St Annes is seeking to develop and implement a number of significant projects and initiatives which will enhance both the built and natural environment and the quality of its visitor offer. This is particularly important given the opportunity presented by the 2012 Open Championships. Two of the key planned projects/initiatives include:</p> <p>The Visitor Economy Pilot – The overarching aim of the pilot is to learn about how groups of stakeholders in neighbourhoods can improve the quality of the visitor experience in their area. Whilst the initiative is to be run across the North West, St Annes has been selected as the only coastal pilot. The Visitor Economy Pilot is aimed at identifying projects and actions that will provide a framework for creating a destination of excellence in service and environmental terms. In doing this the Visitor Economy Pilot will seek to prepare the resort for 2012 Open Championships and endeavour to maximise the event’s legacy.</p> <p>Implementing the Resort Action Plan – This plan covers those projects and activities that are required to further develop and enhance the centre of the resort. A core component of this is the implementation of the seafront masterplan. This incorporates both the enhancement of the existing promenade gardens and the redevelopment of the area around Pleasure Island and Salters Wharf.</p>					
Lead Partner	Fylde Borough Council					
Project Progress	<p>The Visitor Economy Pilot is at a relatively embryonic stage. The inaugural launch event was held at the start of February 2008. However, the detail has yet to be developed.</p> <p>The Seafront Masterplan has been completed in outline.</p> <p>Alongside these projects, investment and the development of the public realm is ongoing. However, a comprehensive strategy has yet to be developed.</p>					
Next Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop partnership structure and action plans for Visitor Economy Pilot 2) Undertake more detailed design work for the seafront area 3) Secure funding for the promenade gardens and enter into discussions with private sector partners for the Pleasure Island / Salters Wharf site. 					
Timetable	The intention is to complete activity in advance of the 2012 Open.					
Anticipated Costs						
£’000	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total
Total	950	1,400	1,100	600	200	4,250
Funding	Local Authority, NWDA/Tourist Board and HLF					
Principle Risks	Perhaps the most significant overall risk is securing the necessary resource to implement the planned activity. However, once there is greater detail available there will be more practical risks which should be considered (i.e. planning, ownership, access etc...)					
Partnership Actions	There is less scope for the Partnership to initiate or facilitate than is the case for its other core activities. However, given the importance of the gateway, the Partnership should seek to advocate and ensure that other Regional Park projects link in with and derive benefit from the planned development of St Annes. Practically this should be achieved by ensuring that Partnership is represented upon any Steering Groups / Project Development Groups.					

Outcomes from Priority 2: The outcomes from these activities are threefold:

- Firstly, there will be clarity around the optimal way in which to improve access and movement around the Regional Park. This will give clear direction to future development and investment.
- Secondly, there will be a network of footpaths (and in some sections towpaths, bridleways and cycleways) which will link the inland assets of the Regional Park with the Estuary.
- Thirdly, there will be a coastal trail which hugs the coastline and estuary and forms an important asset which is promoted by and embedded in the Regional Park.
- Lastly, at the northern end there will be a high quality resort which will both attract and signpost people into the Regional Park and provide the necessary facilities for tourists to stay in the area and prolong their visit.

Priority 3: Flagship Attractions

Core Activities [Revenue]

4.17 A key attraction will be a **Regional Park Festival** or flagship event. At this stage this could either take the form of an individual signature event or a programme of events across the Regional Park area. As an initial step (and building upon work done to date), the Partnership will continue to co-ordinate and promote the existing calendar of events. This is currently being undertaken by the co-ordinator of Action Ribble Estuary. The Partnership will seek to identify ways in which the programme can be expanded and enhanced (i.e. developing one or a series of event(s) of regional, national and ultimately international significance). Developing the festival is therefore seen to be an organic process. Ideas for the festival (or wider programme of events include):

- Developing a northern or even nationally significant bird watching festival, building upon existing bird festivals / fairs in the area (this could involve building upon the WWT Bird Festival and extending it to include other centres);
- A celebration of the history of the Ribble;
- Further developing the existing walking festival; and
- An Arts festival with temporary exhibits alongside the permanent arts trail.

Core Activities [Capital]

Activity: Douglas Crossing	
Description	The project involves the construction of a non vehicle crossing point on the River Douglas. The crossing will connect with local public rights of way and will form part of the North West Coast Trail. Currently it is envisaged that the crossing will be constructed for use by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. This will be subject to the completion of a demand assessment.
Lead Partner	Currently this is REMADE. Once the project appraisal stage is completed (currently being conducted by REMADE) there is uncertainty around what will happen and who will lead on the project. It could be handed over to the Steering Group or REMADE may continue to lead.
Project Progress	<i>Done</i>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure report (which identified some issues with the existing abutments), • Ecology report, and • Property report (considers land rights issues). <p><i>Underway</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contaminated land / geotechnical report, • Planning report, • Consideration of the strategic and economic benefits, and • Drafting brief for a design competition. 					
Next Steps	<p>1) REMADE to do a SWOT analysis of the project.</p> <p>2) Commence the design competition for the bridge. This will be a 2 staged process managed by RIBA. Stage 1 involves the production of high level designs which will be used as a basis upon which to create a short list. Stage 2 will require public consultation and will involve the production of more detailed designs.</p>					
Timetable	<p>The design competition will be launched at the end of May / beginning of June. This process is likely to take at least six months . The duration will be dependent upon the type of public consultation undertaken.</p> <p>REMADE initially envisaged that the project should reach the construction stage in 09/10. This however, will be entirely dependent upon a number of delivery factors.</p>					
Anticipated Costs						
£'000	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Project Total
Capital Estimate [greater clarity following design comp]		2,000				2,000*
* This is a very rough estimate and will need to be updated following the completion of the design competition						
Funding	<p>There is currently £150,000 in the REMADE business plan. A decision will need to be taken about whether the project should apply for funding under REMADE or directly to the Agency.</p> <p>The project will also need to review other possible funding sources.</p>					
Principle Risks	<p>Risk 1: Securing support from existing landowners for the development of the crossing Mitigation: Discussions to be picked up as part of the consultation process once there is greater clarity around the design and implications of the project.</p> <p>Risk 2: Securing necessary funding for the project Mitigation: Undertaking a thorough appraisal of the project and ensuring there is a clear case for the project before seeking funding.</p> <p>There will be other risks related to securing the necessary approvals and construction. These will become clearer following the appraisal stage and the conclusion of the design competition.</p>					
Partnership Actions	<p>1) Discussions with REMADE to identify which organisation should lead the project development and delivery post appraisal.</p> <p>2) The Partnership role will be depending upon the outcome of those discussions. However, there is likely to be a need to conduct a review of possible funding sources and support/complete funding applications.</p> <p>3) Involvement in design competition.</p> <p>4) Ongoing advocacy role.</p>					

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Activity: Public Arts Trail						
Description	The project involves the development of an innovative and unique Arts Trail. This will use art to harness the environmental assets of the Regional Park. For example the use of solar and wind power, light and sound to explore conservation issues and the geography of the estuary. This will include permanent and temporary exhibits across the Regional Park area and will be accompanied by education, promotion and engagement programmes.					
Lead Partner	Instigated by Lancashire County Council. However, it is envisaged that the project will be taken forwards by new sub group which is to be created for this project.					
Project Progress	The project is at the concept stage with feasibility work yet to be undertaken.					
Next Steps	The next step is to commission a feasibility study which looks specifically at what could be developed, how this could work cross district, how the trail could be delivered in an innovative and environmentally sensitive way, the likely costs and potential funding sources. Following this, the next task would be to secure funding to enable the project to go ahead.					
Timetable	Feasibility study to be completed later summer. Project delivery dependent upon the ability to secure funding.					
Anticipated Costs						
£'000	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Project Total
Feasibility study	20					20
Estimated project delivery costs		1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	5,000*
Total						5,020
* Please note this is a very rough estimate of the costs and covers 5 permanent exhibits, c. 15 temporary exhibits, education and engagement programmes and the cost of a project manager. A more accurate figure can be calculated following the completion of the feasibility study. Moreover, for simplicity the total cost has been profiled equally across four years. The development phase could extend beyond five years and the spend profile is likely to vary. However, this can be updated following the completion of the feasibility study.						
Funding	Lancashire County Council will put 50 percent towards the cost of the feasibility study. This will need to be matched from another funding source. Discussions with the Arts Council are ongoing. In terms of the project costs, this has yet to be determined.					
Principle Risks	At this stage the key risk faced is likely to be an inability to secure sufficient funding. However, a more detailed consideration of risk and mitigating actions will take place following the completion of the feasibility work.					
Partnership Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop a brief 2) Oversee the commissioning of a feasibility study 2) Identify and secure funding sources 3) Potential for any sub group created to evolve into working group which oversees and guides project development alongside the project manager. 					

Activity: Developing the Fairhaven Masterplan	
Description	This project relates to the development of a masterplan for the area around Fairhaven boating lake which is also home to the RSPB Ribble Discovery Centre and the adjacent Granny's Bay. The Boating Lake has silted up and the area is in need of investment. Moreover, there is likely to be investment in and the construction of sea defences adjacent to the site. The Fairhaven Masterplan provides a good opportunity to thematically link the resorts of

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	St Annes and Lytham with the natural assets of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands.					
Lead Partner	Fylde Borough Council					
Project Progress	Initial feasibility work has been undertaken for the construction of sea defences. No other feasibility or masterplanning work has been undertaken to date.					
Next Steps	The next steps will involve the development of a brief for the work required, securing funding for this work and commissioning consultants					
Timetable	This has yet to be determined. However, for the purpose of this business plan the completion of the study has been profiled for the next financial year (09/10).					
Anticipated Costs	This is an estimated cost as a brief has yet to be developed.					
£'000	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total
Feasibility and Masterplanning		50				50
Total		50				50
Funding	Funding from the construction of sea defences may be available.					
Principle Risks	Currently, the greatest risk is securing sufficient funding to commission the Masterplan.					
Partnership Actions	1) advise on the brief 2) identify potential sources and secure funding 3) support the commissioning process.					

Activity: Expanding Hesketh Out Marsh						
Description	The project involves the eastwards expansion of the existing Hesketh Out Marsh project. This is a coastal realignment scheme, which involves the creation of important estuarine wetland habitat. Hesketh will become part of a nationally significant habitat for wintering and breeding birds.					
Lead Partner	RSPB					
Project Progress	There is an in principle agreement with the Environment Agency to replicate the work undertaken to the west (i.e. the original Hesketh project which is nearing completion). Land purchase discussions have been initiated with the area's two landowners. RSPB is in the process of agreeing a funding package.					
Next Steps	The next steps are to continue and conclude discussions with land owners and funders. Undertake the necessary feasibility work					
Timetable	The project is likely to be undertaken in two phases. This has informed the expenditure profile included below.					
Anticipated Costs	Please note, these figures cover land purchase, feasibility, planning, fees and project management, works on the ground and monitoring.					
£'000	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total
Total	850	680	1,520	750		3,800
Funding	Yet to be agreed.					
Principle Risks	At this stage the main risks are as follows: 1) Reaching an agreement with landowners over land purchase 2) The ability to securing the necessary consents 3) The feasibility of the project within the funding package under discussion 4) Successfully securing funding					
Partnership Actions	As is the case for the development of St Annes, there is less scope on this project for the Partnership to initiate or facilitate activity. However, given					

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	its strategic importance the Partnership has a role to play in terms of advocacy and ensuring that links are made with other projects. In practice this is likely to mean that a representative of the Partnership with a good operational oversight (i.e. the Programme Manager) will attend planning meetings for the Hesketh project to ensure that it links in and achieves synergies with adjacent projects. For example, the Douglas Crossing, route development and if relevant, the development of the Arts Trail.
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Activity: The Expansion of Martin Mere						
Description	The expansion of Martin Mere comprises of four components: 1. New build coffee shop on site to accommodate larger number of people with the potential inclusion of function facilities; 2. The implementation of the Martin Mere Grounds five year Masterplan; 3. The purchase of additional land on the reserve; and 4. Creation of footpaths between New Lane Station and Martin mere to improve public transport)					
Lead Partner	WWT - Martin Mere					
Project Progress	1. Architects currently producing drawings for the coffee shop. 2. Later this year, a five year strategy will be drafted for the redevelopment of the waterfowl gardens including a new children's play area, new exhibits and landscaping 3. Working with local farmers to continually review available land. 4. Path is already in place with landscaping and signage required plus purchasing additional land to link the footpaths together					
Next Steps	1. Await architectural drawings and finalise design with Management Board 2. Meetings with Management Board in May 2008, following which the five year strategy will be drafted and costings researched. 3. Ongoing work with farmers 4. Discussions with land owners and partners, and look to secure funding.					
Timetable	1. Coffee Shop to be built and open in 2009 2. Strategy to be written by end of 2008 3. Ongoing over the next five years 4. Anticipated completion within the next five years					
Anticipated Costs						
£'000	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Project Total
New Build Coffee Shop	15	335				350
Five Year Masterplan	25	25	25	25	25	125
Land purchase						Unknown*
Footpaths						Unknown
Total	40	360	25	25	25	
* land could cost up to £10,000 an acre plus developing costs						
Funding	1. Supplied internally and working with WWT Fundraising to raise capital. 2. External funding through sponsorship, funding through Friends of Martin Mere, local grants and internal funding through legacies etc. 3. Grants, member donations, legacies and sponsorship 4. Grants, member donations, legacies and sponsorship					
Principle Risks	The principle risk across all four strands is securing the necessary funding. For strands 3 and 4, increasing land values also poses a risk.					
Partnership Actions	As is the case for the development of St Annes and Hesketh Outmarsh, there is less scope on this project for the Partnership to initiate or facilitate					

activity. However, given the strategic importance of Martin Mere, the Partnership has a role to play in terms of advocacy and ensuring that links are made with other projects.

Outcome from Priority 3: A series of attractions and events which will attract a wide range of audiences to the Regional Park to experience and benefit from its landscape and wildlife. These attractions will be receive national recognition and will clearly convey a sense of identity for the Regional Park.

Priority 4: Raising Public Awareness

Community Engagement

4.18 There is already a wide range of community engagement activity taking place within the Regional Park area. Examples include:

- The volunteer events promoted by Action Ribble Estuary,
- The engagement activities of BTCV and The Wildlife Trust (Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside),
- The Natural England and MerseyCare PCT Initiative which provides volunteer opportunities within the National Nature Reserve to those with mental health difficulties,
- The health walks for local residents, and
- Clubs such as the Junior Rangers.

4.19 Therefore, the task is one of building on the existing programme of activity.

Core Activities [Revenue]

4.20 There are organisations which promote community engagement in the natural environment, but currently do not operate in the Regional Park area. The most notable example is Groundwork. Moreover, there are a number of pilots, initiatives and grants funds (for example the newly created Access to Nature funding) which could be applied to the Regional Park to roll out or create innovative engagement programmes.

Figure 4-2: Access to Nature Grant Programme

Access to Nature is a £25 million grant scheme funded by the Big Lottery Fund and Natural England. The scheme seeks to encourage organisations to come forwards with projects and programmes which will deliver against one or more of the following objectives:

- 1) A greater number and diversity of people benefiting from the natural environment;
- 2) More people learning about the natural environment and gaining new skills;
- 3) More people able to enjoy the natural environment as a result of improvements in access to natural places and more connections between sites;
- 4) More wildlife-rich natural places that are sustainably managed and meet the needs of local communities; and

5) An increased sense of community ownership of local natural places, by the creation of strong partnerships between communities, voluntary organisations, local authorities and statutory bodies. The scheme is looking to promote partnership working and support innovative and sustainable projects which will produce lasting change. Further information can be found at: www.naturalengland.org.uk/leisure/grants-funding.

- 4.21 Given the likely resource constraints and the current level of community engagement in the Regional Park, at this stage, the role of the Partnership is to enter into discussions with those organisations involved in engagement activities both within and beyond the Regional Park area to identify how the existing programme can be expanded. In the first instance this may involve initiating or attracting engagement activity which successfully operates elsewhere. This may require support / advice to secure the necessary funding. There may also be scope to initiate new projects in response to the creation of the Access to Nature Grants Scheme. However, it is not anticipated that the Partnership will directly deliver any community engagement activity.
- 4.22 No financial information can be put against this activity at this stage.

Tourism Promotion

- 4.23 It is important to consider when it is appropriate for tourism promotion to be undertaken with any degree of rigour. It could be argued that until further product development work has been undertaken tourism promotion should not be the highest priority and the focus of the Partnership should be on selling the concept internally. Nevertheless, the Partnership should not miss out on any promotional opportunities which may attract visitors into the area or prolong their stay. Therefore, at this stage the focus is on feeding into the marketing initiatives of others and ensuring that materials have been developed to enable the Partnership to do so. The communications plan should be developed to provide further guidance on this.
- 4.24 However, prior to moving forwards with tourism promotion, there remain two issues to resolve: branding and the boundary.

Figure 4-3: The Promotion and Branding Debate

In this context branding refers to a name, slogan and/or logo which are used to identify and differentiate the Regional Park. Typically the brand is used to convey the visual, emotional and cultural image of the organisation, product or service that it represents. In the case of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands there are two schools of thought with respect to branding:

1) The first is that the Partnership and its programme of activities should be branded rather than the park itself. Underpinning this is the view that the 'Ribble Coast and Wetlands' should not be promoted to an external audience as a destination. Rather it is the individual assets which should be promoted, and should, in turn participate in themed marketing activity at a sub regional or regional level. Therefore the Regional Park is a concept used to develop the area in a strategic and joined up way. Nevertheless, the work of the partnership should be identifiable, particularly to those who may support and or deliver this activity. Therefore a brand is required at an organisational level. This is the approach adopted by the Mersey Waterfront.

2) The second school of thought is that the Regional Park is a destination and should be promoted as such. Therefore, all assets / activity within and relating to the park should be branded. This is the approach adopted by the Lee Valley Regional Park and the aspiration for the Weaver Valley.

Prior to pursuing any promotional activity it is imperative that this issue is resolved. This is to ensure there is no confusion and consistency.

Recommendation: Given that the varying views on branding are indicative of the differing ways in which Partners interpret the Regional Park as a concept (i.e. the creation of a single destination ‘the Ribble Coast and Wetlands’ and/or a joined up way of working) it is important to establish how the Ribble Coast and Wetlands is branded and promoted, and at what point in time it is appropriate to do so. This should be resolved in the short term as it will underpin the way in which the concept is positioned and promoted to both partners and indeed to visitors. Therefore this is included as a core activity below and as an early step in the implementation plan.

Figure 4-4: The Boundary Debate and Recommendation

As is illustrated in Figure 4-3, the boundary of the Regional Park stretches from Formby to the southern edge of Blackpool. To the North of the Ribble, it hugs the Estuary and to the south it reaches further inland to incorporate Martin Mere and Mere Sands Wood. However Partner consultations continue to question whether or not this is the optimal boundary for the Regional Park. Perhaps the most contentious issue is the way in which there is an overlap with the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park which reaches as far north as Southport Pier. As with the branding debate, there are two schools of thought:

- 1) Firstly, some have expressed the view that the overlap clouds the concept. It does not provide a clear division of spatial responsibility and will make it more difficult to market as a destination (should this be pursued).
- 2) Others feel that the boundary should reflect the catchment of the estuary and the natural assets therein. It is felt that the boundary should not be tied to administrative boundaries and should be sufficiently broad to seize any relevant opportunities should they arise.

Whilst it will be important to resolve this issue, it is also important to note that given the proximity of the two regional parks (and indeed Morecambe Bay to the North), there may be greater scope for cross border working.

Recommendation: For the reasons highlighted under 1) and given the spatial focus of activities within this business plan, the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park should be adjacent to (not overlapping with) the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park. Therefore, the southern boundary could be Southport pier. The Partnership should also look into the possibility of extending the reach of the Regional Park northwards and eastwards. This may require a boundary change or could be achieved via the establishment of clear links with neighbouring assets (the latter is also picked up in other sections of this business plan).

Core Activities [Revenue]

4.25 There are three core activities to be undertaken in the short to medium term:

- **Resolving the issue of branding** – To debate and resolve the issue of branding a one day workshop will be held for members of the Steering Group and Marketing Sub Group. In advance of this meeting, specialist expertise will be procured to prepare a briefing paper in advance and facilitate the day. The outcome will be a definitive view as to the approach to and the timing of the branding and promotion of the Regional Park. It may be appropriate to discuss the issue of the boundary at this session also. An indicative cost of £3,000 in 2008/09 has been included in an overall marketing budget for this task.
- **Developing Promotional Material** – This activity will be driven in part by the decision around branding. However, this is envisaged to involve the production of generic promotional materials for the Park and the completion and maintenance of a website. There should be clarity around the audience for and purpose of the

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website before proceeding. In terms of the cost of this activity, £3,000 is included for the completion of the website, the domain name and maintenance, and £3,000 for the development of promotional material in 08/09. For the two following years a budget of £5,000 a year has been provisionally allocated for the update and continuation of this work. Finally the marketing budget is stepped up to £10,000 in 10/11 to reflect the scope for greater promotional activity.

- **Linking into existing tourism promotion activity** – The Partnership should liaise with those actively engaged in tourism promotion in the area and wider region to ensure that the Regional Park and/or its assets are integral to any promotional activities. This could include links on other organisations' websites, tying in with themed marketing campaigns, reference in promotional brochures and posters / leaflets at exhibitions. In this way the Partnership should seek to maximise the linkages with the Golf Coast / Open 2012 and the transformation of Blackpool.

4.26 There may also be specific marketing that will be required as part of the development of flagship attractions (for example the Regional Park Festival and the Public Arts Trail). These costs should be integral to the activity / project costs.

Outcome from Priority 4: There will be clarity around the boundaries and branding of the Regional Park. There will be a comprehensive range of community engagement activities in and around the Regional Park. There will be a high quality website. Finally, the Regional Park (or the key assets therein) will be prominent within partner promotional material and will therefore attract a larger number of visitors.

5. The Structure of the Partnership

Introduction

- 5.1 This chapter of the business plan considers the role of the partnership, its current structure and recommendations for the future enhancement of this structure, and the governance arrangements therein. These recommendations are based upon discussions with partners and will require further consideration and sign off by the Steering Group before proceeding.

The Role of the Partnership

- 5.2 As is illustrated in Figure 4-1, the role of the Partnership can be broken down into three elements:

- **Delivery** - The partnership will directly deliver a number of ongoing activities, most notably around concept promotion and positioning.
- **Project initiation, support and facilitation** – The partnership will play a key role in developing those projects which are instrumental to the achievement of the Regional Park vision. The specific role of the partnership will vary according to the activity or project, but will take the form of one or more of the following:
 - Identify cross boundary opportunities;
 - Help secure the necessary funding / investment;
 - Act in an advisory capacity; and
 - Potentially provide project management support.
- **Making links with existing activities** – Given that the partnership will face resource constraints it will be particularly important to link in with and maximise the impact of existing activities / initiatives (i.e. particularly around tourist promotion). There are also opportunities to attract new programmes and initiatives to the Regional Park area.

- 5.3 It is important to ensure that the structure of the Partnership reflects this role. This is considered in the following sections.

The Structure of the Partnership

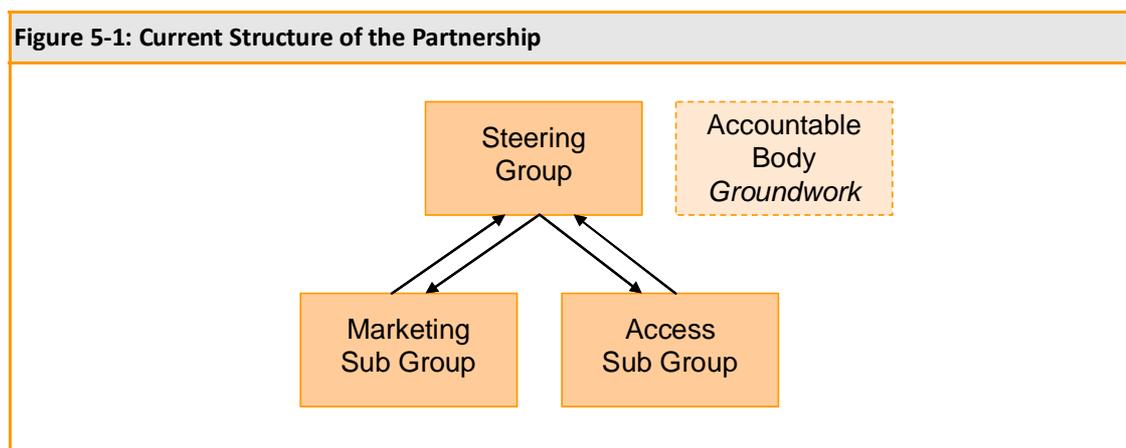
The Current Structure Explained

- 5.4 The Ribble Coast and Wetlands Partnership brings together a wide range of organisations with varying spatial and thematic remits. It includes the following organisations:

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- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) Action Ribble Estuary | 11) Preston City Council |
| 2) British Waterways | 12) Royal Society for the Protection of Birds |
| 3) Environment Agency | 13) Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council |
| 4) Fylde Borough Council | 14) South Ribble Borough Council |
| 5) Fylde Vision | 15) The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside |
| 6) Groundwork Lancashire West and Wigan | 16) West Lancashire District Council |
| 7) Lancashire County Council | 17) Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. |
| 8) Lancashire Rural Futures | |
| 9) Mersey Basin Campaign | |
| 10) Natural England | |

5.5 Figure 5-1 illustrates the current structure of the Partnership:



5.6 The following table sets out the membership and current roles and responsibilities for the constituent parts of the Partnership as illustrated above.

Table 5-1: Current Structure of the Partnership - Composition and Roles		
	Composition	Role
Steering Group	The Steering Group is made up of representatives from each of the partner organisations.	There are no formal Terms of Reference for the Steering Group in its current form. However, its role principally consists of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an overview of activities taking place within the Regional Park; • Facilitate the development of key activities; • Identify and secure funding for Partnership based activity; and • Oversee the work of the sub groups.
Marketing Sub Group	Marketing representatives from the following organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RSPB - Preston City Council 	As stated in the Terms of Reference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To seek ways to market the environmental assets as they relate to water and birds, supported by history of water management, ecological and archaeological information.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - South Ribble Borough Council - Lancashire County Council - Environment Agency - The Wildlife Trust - Natural England - Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council - British Waterways - Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board - West Lancashire District Council - Action Ribble Estuary - Fylde Borough Council - Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To actively contribute to the development and implementation of a coordinated marketing strategy and its action plan for the RCWRP. • To advise on availability of funding resources for development and implementation of a coordinated marketing strategy, and assist in the development of funding bids for this purpose. • To ensure the delivery of marketing action plan within the capability of existing resources, skills and knowledge and by participation in task groups as necessary.
Access Sub Group	<p>Representatives from the following organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action Ribble Estuary - British Waterways - Environment Agency - Lancashire County Council - North West Regional Assembly (NWCT Officer) - Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust <p>There is some overlap at an individual level with representation on the Steering Group and the Marketing Group.</p>	<p>The Access Group will oversee the production and implementation of an Access Strategy.</p> <p>Alongside this it is seeking to promote and support route development. This includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burscough to Banks, • The North West Coastal Trail (to date there are three identified projects: the Douglas crossing and route development at Freckleton and Hundred End), and • The Rufford Branch Canal.

5.7 Groundwork currently acts as the accountable body for any external funding received and also, when in post, was responsible for employing and line managing the Project Development Manager.

5.8 There are a number of planned changes / additions to the above structure. These have yet to be formerly signed off. They include:

- The creation of an Arts Sub Group to oversee the development of the Public Arts Trail; and
- The creation of an Operations Group which will sit beneath the Steering Group - this is proposed as part of the Partnership Agreement which is currently in draft.

A Review of the Current Structure

5.9 As part of the business planning process, partners were asked about the effectiveness of the current structure and governance arrangements, and whether there are any possible ways in which these could be enhanced. From these discussions, the following is apparent:

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- Whilst progress has been made and the current structure has engaged with and brought on board a good range of partners, there is now a need to enhance these arrangements and ensure that they are fit for purpose.
- In terms of the structure of the Partnership, there needs to be greater clarity around the roles and responsibilities of its constituent parts and more formal reporting arrangements in each case.
- The Partnership needs a full time manager and administrative support. A permanent member of staff will be important in progressing projects and activity and in order to generate momentum.
- There needs to be a written agreement to formalise and clarify partner involvement.

5.10 Based upon these points and the role set out above, a series of recommendations are set out in Figure 5-2 which related to the future enhancement of the structure and governance arrangements for the Regional Park Partnership.

Figure 5-2 Future Recommendations and Financial Implications

Recommendation 1: Develop (or revise) Terms of Reference (ToR) for each of the Partnerships constituent groups which ensure that the roles and responsibilities clearly relate to the requirements of the core activities set out within this business plan. These ToRs should also establish the composition, level of delegated authority and reporting mechanisms for each group.

Financial Implication: This can be done by an existing member of the Partnership on an in-kind basis or external support could be commissioned to complete the task. This is likely to cost between £3,000 and £6,000 depending upon the process and the number of new sub groups created. This is reflected in the investment plan.

Recommendation 2: Separating the strategic from the operational. There needs to be an overarching Group which has a strategic focus. This could involve reconfiguring the existing Steering Group as a new Strategic Board. This would be smaller than the existing Steering Group and membership would reflect its strategic role [For consistency purposes this group continues to be referred to as the Steering Group throughout the remainder business plan]. This group should be tasked with senior level advocacy, agreeing and signing off the annual business plan, monitoring progress against the business plan, signing off any significant elements of partnership activity and setting up sub groups. Any core staff would have to report to this group.

The sub groups provide the operational focus (working alongside any permanent staff). They should be formed to complete specific tasks as per this business plan. The remit and any significant deliverables must be signed off by the Steering Group. Membership of the sub-groups should reflect their purpose.

Recommendation 3: Appoint a high profile chair to lead the Partnership. The Steering Group should be led by a senior figure, possibly from the private sector. This individual would provide an important leadership and advocacy role for the Regional Park. The role of the Chair should be set out within the Terms of Reference for the Steering Group.

Recommendation 4: Appointment of a Partnership Manager and part time secretarial support. As highlighted previously, a full time manager will be important in progressing projects, undertaking core activities and in order to generate momentum. To support the Manager in this role and the work of the Strategic Board and Sub-Groups, administrative support is also required. Without this support there is the risk that the Programme Manager would be side tracked by administrative tasks. The staff would be employed by Groundwork as the accountable body and would therefore be based at Groundwork premises and would have access to the organisation's office resources and systems. At some point in the future the Partnership should seek to secure additional marketing expertise and capacity as the Park develops. This should be considered in future iterations of this business plan.

Financial Implications: The staff costs for a Partnership Manager and part time secretarial support (say 2 days per week) is £233,000 over five years and the associated overhead recovery costs are estimated to be £62,435. The way in which this cost is calculated is set out over the page. These costs have also been included within the Investment plan in the following chapter.

5.11 In accepting these recommendations, the Partnership would need to undertake the following Partnership development actions:

- Develop Terms of Reference [integral to which would be the reporting mechanisms and the role of the chair] and sign off;
- Implementation of any necessary changes to group membership;
- Appoint chair;
- Develop and sign off job specification and line management arrangements for Programme Manager and secretariat support;
- Secure necessary funding for the Programme Manager and Secretariat support; and
- Advertise and appoint permanent staff.

5.12 These have been incorporated into the proceeding Implementation plan (see Chapter 8)

Calculating Staff and Overhead Costs

5.13 The following assumptions have been made in calculating the revenue costs for a Programme Manager and administrative support.

Table 5-2: Staff Cost Assumptions	
Salary increase (at rate of inflation)	3 % p.a.
On costs	18 %
Partnership Manager Starting Salary	£30,000
Administrative Support Starting Salary (pro rata. 2 days per week)	£18,000 (£7,200)

5.14 Using the above assumption, the five year profile of staff costs are set out in the table below.

Table 5-3: Staff Costs						
	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12 / 13	Total
Partnership Manager	35,400	36,462	37,556	38,683	39,843	187,943
Administrative support	8,496	8,751	9,013	9,284	9,562	45,106
Total	43,896	45,213	46,569	47,966	49,405	233,050

5.15 To accompany these costs, the investment plan also includes recruitment costs of £3,000 and overhead recovery costs. The latter are provided by Groundwork for an additional 1.4 FTEs. The overhead recovery cost is derived from the following assumptions.

Table 5-4: Overhead Recovery Assumptions	
Assumption	
Recovery cost per hour worked	£6
Chargeable hours per FTE per year	1400
Annual inflation	3%

5.16 Using the above assumption, the five year profile of overhead recovery costs are set out in the table below.

Table 5-5: Overhead Recovery						
	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12 / 13	Total
Overhead recovery	11,760	12,113	12,476	12,850	13,236	62,435

Performance Monitoring

5.17 Performance monitoring to be undertaken by the Partnership falls within two distinct categories:

- 1) Monitoring progress against this business plan – A quarterly update paper should be prepared by the Programme Manager for the Steering Group which provides a short overview of progress for each activity, an updated version of the investment plan, and also reports on deviations from the Implementation Plan (i.e. by exception). This should be issued in line with the scheduled Steering Group meetings.
- 2) Monitoring progress against the baseline – An annual monitoring report should be produced which revisits those indicators set out within the baseline (particularly those which relate to the economic targets set out in Chapter 7). This will ultimately seek to establish impact of activities. In later years, this report may require the Partnership to undertake / commission a survey work (i.e. perceptions). The investment plan assumes that the report will be produced by the programme manager. However, should there be sufficient financial resource, consultants could be commissioned to complete this. No figure has been included for survey work at this stage.

6. Overall Investment Plan

- 6.1 The following table consolidates the financial information presented in two preceding chapters. It sets out the anticipated investment required to implement the core activities and the recommendations made in relation to the development of the Partnership. It is not a comprehensive list of all investment taking place within the Regional Park - **it is the investment required to tackle the identified priorities over the next five years.**
- 6.2 The costs associated with core revenue activities are integral to the ongoing costs for the operation of the Partnership. For capital activities, the costs are presented on an individual basis. As highlighted previously, many of these activities are at a fairly embryonic stage, therefore where an indicative cost is included, this is likely to need updating as the project develops.
- 6.3 It is important to highlight that this investment plan does not capture the in-kind contributions of partners. To date progress has been dependent upon the enthusiasm and additional work taken on by partners. This will continue to be integral to the Partnership's success.

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Table 6-1: Investment Plan for Ribble Coast and Wetlands Partnership										
£'000	Estimated Cost						Funding Profile			
	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total	LAs	NWDA / LEP	Other	Funding Gap
Partnership										
<i>Development</i>										
P'ship Consultancy Support	6,000					6,000				
Recruitment costs	3,000					3,000				
<i>Ongoing operation</i>										
Staff costs (incl. on costs)	43,896	45,213	46,569	47,966	49,405	233,050				
Overhead recovery	11,760	12,113	12,476	12,850	13,236	62,435				
Expenses budget	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	5,000				
Marketing budget	9,000	5,000	5,000	10,000	10,000	41,000				
Partnership Total	74,656	63,326	65,045	71,817	73,641	348,485			13,791*	334,695
Projects										
Access Strategy	35,000					35,000				35,000
Route 1 Burscough to Banks	8,000					8,000				8,000
Route 2 – Rufford Branch		36,000				36,000				36,000
Gateway Devt - St Annes	950,000	1,400,000	1,100,000	600,000	200,000	4,250,000	800,000**	200,000**	1,500,000*	1,750,000
Douglas Crossing		2,000,000				2,000,000		150,000**		1,850,000
Public Arts Trail	20,000	1,250,000	1,250,000	1,250,000	1,250,000	5,020,000	10,000*			5,010,000
Fairhaven Masterplan		50,000				50,000				50,000
Expanding Hesketh Outmarsh	850,000	680,000	1,520,000	750,000		3,800,000			3,800,000**	
Expanding Martin Mere	40,000	360,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	475,000			425,000	50,000
Project Total Specified	1,903,000	5,776,000	3,895,000	2,625,000	1,475,000	15,674,000	810,000	350,000	5,725,000	8,789,000

* Committed ** Identified (recognised in funding body investment plan or application submitted)

Please note there is currently a provisional allocation of £525,453 for the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park within the Sub Regional Action Plan.

7. The Economic Potential of the Regional Park

Introduction

- 7.1 In making the case for investment in the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park an important step is to articulate the economic potential of the Park. A baseline assessment of the natural and visitor assets, as well as the socio-economic profile of the Regional Park, has been undertaken as part of this commission. This is helpful in understanding what the current socio-economic role of the Regional Park is, and provides a useful starting point from which we are able to gain a better understanding of the likely economic potential of the Park going forward to 2020.
- 7.2 Consultations and desk-based research has enabled a view to be taken on the extent to which existing visitor assets may grow and expand in the future within the Regional Park. Proposed new attractions within the Regional Park which are likely to have come on stream by 2020 are also considered. As well as quantifying these two strands, the potential role which activities set out within this business plan could contribute towards the future economic potential of the Regional Park has been estimated. Although these estimates will go some of the way to understanding the economic potential of the Regional Park, a significant proportion of visitors fall within what is referred to as the Catalytic Impact. This covers the impact of significant resort enhancement/regeneration investments (i.e. St Annes and Preston) and also the impact of the likely increase in private sector investment in and around the Regional Park.

The Economic Role of Regional Parks

- 7.3 There is a wide range of literature available and debate which explores, in varying ways, the extent to which the development of green infrastructure can play an economic role in a location (e.g. ECOTECs report for NWDAs Natural Economy Northwest Steering Group on the economic benefits of green infrastructure, March 2008). Many of the points raised in the ECOTEC report on the key benefits of green infrastructure accord with the views set out in this section on the economic role of regional parks. The ECOTEC report also makes explicit reference to the role which green infrastructure can play in addressing the impacts of climate change e.g. opportunities of land owners with renewable energy sources and flood alleviation proposals.
- 7.4 It is also worth noting that the NWDA has appointed AMION Consulting to undertake a study which considers and seeks to quantify the economic value of green infrastructure. This study has yet to conclude. However, once completed it should further support the economic role of Regional Parks.
- 7.5 Set out below is a synthesised view on the key economic roles which the development of regional parks can play. These can be distilled into three broad roles:

Enhanced Liveability and Inward Investment

7.6 Regional parks have the ability to enhance the liveability of locations and as such help retain and attract skilled labour for the benefit of the local business base. There is scope for the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park to play an important role in helping Preston, Blackpool and surrounding areas to develop their role as a location for knowledge based workers. This is particularly relevant in light of the development of a Multi-Area Agreement (MAA) between the three Fylde coast local authorities and Lancashire County Council who wish to work together to improve economic growth within the area, as well as tackle issues of housing, transportation and sustainable development.

- The Government's current interest in placemaking is driven by a desire to make locations throughout the country more attractive places to live. Both the Planning White Paper and the Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR) drive home the responsibility for local authorities and their partners to shape both perception and conditions in respect of the liveability of their locations.
- Research has shown that amenity/liveability value is a key driver in migration decisions. The degree to which liveability impacts on locational choice varies according to the life cycle of the individuals concerned. There is strong evidence that amenity led migration drives long term migration patterns of individuals, whilst economic opportunity dominates short term fluctuations in the long term patterns².

7.7 Regional parks also add to the inward investment offer of locations. Evidence shows that the amenity value of an area is a key factor in shaping investment decisions. The ability of an area to offer the necessary recreational facilities for workers can be a deciding factor when firms weigh up different locations. There is also strong evidence that smaller, more mobile knowledge based entrepreneurs will be attracted by a high quality of life.

- Investment in parks and open space has a major impact on the attractiveness and image of an area from an investment perspective. Research by Crompton, Love and More (An Empirical Study of the role of Recreation, Parks and Open Space in Companies Location Decisions) found that owners of small companies in the US ranked recreation, parks and open space as one of the highest priorities in selecting locations for new business investment.
- Research by the US National Parks Service found that corporate CEOs considered quality of life for employees the third most important factor in locating a business, behind only access to domestic markets and availability of skilled labour.

Tourism and Visitor Destinations

7.8 Regional parks serve as an important tourism and visitor destination. Regional parks have the potential to attract substantial volumes of visitor spend which in turn supports employment in a range of tourism sectors and supporting industries. This is the most direct economic benefit that regional parks can give rise to.

² See, for example, Mueser and Graves "Examining the role of economic opportunity and amenities in explaining population redistribution" (1995). Journal of Urban Economics.

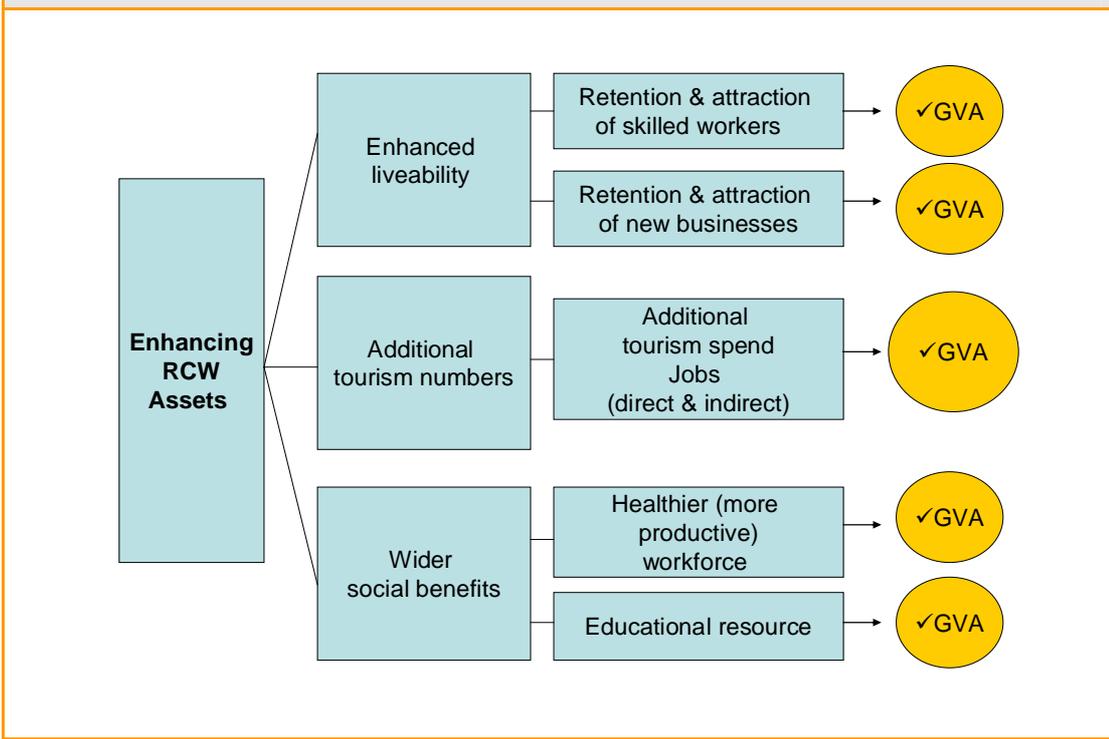
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- The nature of Ribble Coast and Wetlands is such that it will give rise to a broad range of formal and informal recreational opportunities. This will include day visitors from elsewhere in the North West region (and beyond) and local residents making use of the assets of the Regional Park on a more frequent basis. In the future it could also contribute towards prolonging visitors stay in and around the Regional Park.
- In the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park it is estimated that the Commencement Phase generated some 740,000 additional visitors and £12m of additional tourism spend. Plans for the Succession Phase involves the generation of a further £5.6m uplift in visitor spend.

Wider Social Benefits

- 7.9 Regional parks can give rise to a range of social benefits. Social benefits can include: aiding community cohesion, engendering a greater sense of pride in place, generating significant health and well-being benefits, and serving as a valuable educational resource. These benefits can ultimately impact upon the economic well-being of an area.
- There is a growing concern within the UK about the state of the nation's health (both physical and mental health), but importantly that of children and younger people. CABE's 2004 report on *The Value of Public Spaces* emphasises the importance that people have the opportunities and places to undertake exercise, and other activities which improve health and well-being.
 - Increased levels of community cohesion are another important benefit which can be accrued through the development and use of open spaces and parks. Regional parks present a useful tool in encouraging increased levels of civic pride and community participation in the area and reduce social exclusion. Regional parks can also provide opportunities for educational visits, whereby people can learn away from a conventional classroom and experience learning in the subject environment. The Environment Centre at Penwortham provides a good example of where this is already taking place within the Ribble Coast and Wetlands.
- 7.10 It is possible to make a direct link between all of the categories above and the overall levels of wealth, or Gross Value Added (GVA), generated within an area. (see Figure 7-1). This graphic demonstrates, in broad terms, the potential role which regional parks can play in making a positive contribution towards the local and regional economy.

Figure 7-1: Routes to GVA*



* GVA = Gross Value Added. GVA is the most commonly used measure of the overall volume of wealth within an area. The new RDA tasking framework will make GVA/per head *the* principal indicator to measure RDA performance.

The Ribble Coast and Wetlands Baseline Position

7.11 Some of the elements identified in Figure 7-1 lend themselves to quantification, others less so. The following section of the report presents a brief overview of the baseline position of the Regional Park using a range of indicators which aim to quantify the scale of the Regional Park.

RCW Visitor Assets

7.12 The Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park is home to an abundance of natural habitats. Consequently many areas of the Regional Park are protected by international, national and local habitat designations. The six key designations include: RAMSAR and Special protection areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites.

7.13 As well as these six designations the Regional Park has approximately **31 discernable visitor assets** within its boundaries (some of which are centres within national and local nature reserves). In brief these include:

- **Ten** wildlife/environmental attractions – Martin Mere, Mere Sands Wood, Marshside, Brockholes Wetlands and Woodlands Nature Reserve, Longton Brickcroft, Hurst Grange Park, Ribble Discovery Centre, Hesketh Out Marsh, Southport Eco Centre, Ainsdale Discovery Centre.
- **Four** gateway towns/cities – Preston, Lytham, St Annes, and Southport.

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- **Nine** water-related assets – River Ribble, Rufford Canal Branch, Ribble Link Canal, Preston Marina, Preston Docks, Fairhaven Lake, Leisure Lakes, St Mary’s and Fettle’s Wharf Marinas.
- **Six** heritage Assets – West Lancashire Light Railway, Rufford Old Hall, Lytham Hall, Windmill and Lifeboat Museums in Fylde, and many numerous ancient monument designated sites.
- **One** family agriculture Asset – Windmill Farm.
- **One** formal environment education asset – The Environment Education Centre at Penwortham.
- A network of public rights of way – In total the Regional Park has approximately **273km** of public rights of way. Approximately 251km are within the Lancashire County Council part of the Regional Park, whilst 22km are within the Sefton part of the Regional Park.

Measuring the Visitor Economy

- 7.14 The scale of the visitor economy within an area can be measured using the STEAM model³ which estimates total annual visitors, total annual visitor expenditure, as well as direct and indirect employment supported through the visitor economy. As the Regional Park’s boundaries do not relate to local authority areas, which STEAM reports are based upon, some broad assumptions have been made.
- 7.15 As the STEAM data is not available at Regional Park level, estimates of the visitor economy within the Regional Park assume that visitor impacts are evenly distributed across the whole district. Therefore, based upon measuring the area of the district which falls within the Regional Park boundary a proportion of the district’s visitor economy has been allocated to the Regional Park. This has been done for all five Lancashire districts which fall within the Regional Park. In Sefton district a Southport specific STEAM report has been developed and for the purposes of this exercise this report has been used.
- 7.16 The following table highlights analysis of STEAM data for the Ribble Coast and Wetlands area. The table presents data for Lancashire and Southport separately, whilst also presenting aggregated data for the whole Regional Park area.

Table 7-1 – Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park STEAM Visitor Economy Estimates			
	Lancashire Districts (2005)	Southport (2006)	Total RCW
Total Visitors (million/year)	2.59	13.7	16.3
Proportion of Day Visitors	88%	94%	93%
Total Visitor income (£m)	107	384	491
Average Spend per Visitor (£)	41	36	38.5
Employment Supported (FTEs)	2,170	8,100	10,270

³ STEAM – Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor, developed by GTS (UK) Ltd. The model uses both national and local visitor surveys for day and staying visitors – updated periodically throughout the year, it’s own databases on serviced and non-serviced accommodation with localities, and a series of economic and employment multipliers to develop visitor and value reports for local authorities.

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	(1,785 direct)	(5,800 direct)	(7,585 direct)
Source: STEAM, 2006 – Regeneris Consulting Calculations			

7.17 It is clear that Southport has a dominating effect upon the overall Regional Park area estimates. With Southport only representing a small proportion of the overall Regional Park area it is perhaps important to add a note of caution about the use of STEAM data which is heavily skewed by Southport’s large visitor market. The Lancashire estimates, which cover the majority of the Regional Park, are perhaps a better benchmark by which to measure visitor impacts within the Regional Park. Therefore based upon these STEAM estimates the Regional Park:

- Attracts approximately **2.6 million visitors** each year (88% of which are day visitors);
- Generates approximately **£107m** in visitor expenditure; and
- Supports approximately **2,170 FTE jobs**, of which **1,785** are direct jobs.

7.18 Data on visitor numbers to individual attractions (i.e. most of those the attractions listed as visitor assets) is available and is helpful in putting some context alongside the STEAM estimates⁴. The key points for these visitor attractions are:

- They currently attract **1.2 million** visitors each year.
- This equates to approximately 8% share of all Lancashire and Southport STEAM derived visitor numbers to the Regional Park or a **47%** share if just Lancashire’s STEAM estimates are used.
- Southport Eco-Centre and Martin Mere are the most popular visitor attractions in the Regional Park and account for approximately **65%** of all visitors⁵.

Measuring Awareness and Perceptions

7.19 It is important to understand the levels of awareness and perceptions of the Regional Park concept. Unfortunately due to the early stage of the project there has been no survey work undertaken at this stage. Without survey work or research it is difficult to assess the level of awareness about the Regional Park and the key assets. However, examining exposure which the Regional Park has received within the media is one way which indirectly can provide an indication of the extent to which the concept is being promoted more widely, and one which can be continued in the future.

7.20 Using a database (Nexis Lexis) which monitors all UK written media, key word searches have been undertaken for the Regional Park. Using ‘Ribble Estuary Regional Park’ and ‘Ribble Coast and Wetlands’ keywords only four references were found in the database. The articles covered the period of 2005-2007 and included details of the launch of the Park and the Park’s gateways. These articles were published within local newspapers and in the Planning

⁴ As these visitor numbers focus on particular attractions they do not take account of the large number of visits to open countryside (e.g. for walking and cycling), day visits and overnight visits to friends and relatives, as well as business trips.

⁵ However, as a note of caution, the Southport Eco-Centre also serves as a Park & Ride bus station for the town. It is not clear how many of these visitors would be using this facility as opposed to visiting the Eco-Centre.

Journal, with a combined circulation figure of 82,900.

7.21 Based upon this evidence, exposure for the Regional Park within the media has been limited over the last two years. Further keyword searches were also undertaken for comparable regional parks to get an understanding of where the Ribble Coast and Wetlands sat on the media exposure scale. The results showed that the Ribble Coast and Wetlands did not perform as well as the other comparators. Although this can be explained to some extent because the concept has only been live for a few years, other regional parks, particularly River Nene and Lee Valley, have considerably greater exposure.

- **Colne Valley Regional Park** – 11 references across a mix of local, regional and national press coverage, with half of these within the last 6 years. Topics include events, community competitions, funding support provided.
- **Lee Valley Regional Park** – 67 references going back to 2000. Many of these are connected with the profile of the Regional Park within the context of the development of the Olympics infrastructure and the scale of activities and bodies which run facilities with the Park e.g. the Park Authority, Sport England.
- **River Nene Regional Park** – since 2004 there have been 33 references within local/regional newspapers as well as Planning Journal. These have been focused on the development of the Regional Park, its projects, and investments.
- **Weaver Valley Regional Park** – Between 2004-2006 the Regional Park had 11 references from regional press and Planning Journal. The coverage included the development of the park concept, its links to other projects locally and events within the Regional Park.

Wider Ribble Coast and Wetlands Population and Employment Measures

7.22 Population and employment estimates have also been calculated for the Regional Park using best-fit geographies. However, the key points from this analysis are:

- The Regional Park is home to approximately **125,000 residents**, with approximately 70% of all residents concentrated within Lytham and St Annes, Southport and Birkdale, the Warton/Freckleton area, and the A59/A565 corridors (rural villages).
- The Regional Park has a significantly higher than average **older population**. Almost 24% of residents are aged 45-64 years, whilst almost 27% are aged over 65 years.
- The Regional Park area supports approximately **57,500 jobs** and approximately **5,700 businesses**. Almost half of all Ribble Coast and Wetlands employment is concentrated within a small number of SOAs broadly located within the Warton (related to the location of BAE Systems – approximately 7,700 jobs in one SOA), central Southport, Lytham, and Preston (SOAs in close proximity to the docks) areas.

An Assessment of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Economic Potential

7.23 Determining the future economic potential of the Regional Park by 2020 is not straightforward. This is primarily due to issues over the robustness of future investment plans for

current Regional Park assets, and the level of clarity on Partnership activities at this stage of the development process. The STEAM derived estimates provide the current baseline position for the Regional Park in terms of total visitor numbers, visitor expenditure, and employment supported. This section of the business plan recommends a series of year 2020 targets for the Partnership based upon these key metrics. These targets are ambitious but not unrealistic. There is real scope for partners to work collectively towards these over the next 12 years.

7.24 Based upon the research undertaken to support the preparation of this business plan, there is scope for the Partnership to aim for an uplift in total park visitor numbers of 45% (based upon 2005 STEAM estimates of 2.6million visitors) going forward to 2020. This equates to approximately:

- **1.16m** more visitors to the Regional Park⁶;
- An additional **£47.9m** in visitor expenditure (£154.9m in total by 2020 at 2005 prices)⁷;
- An additional **801 direct FTE jobs** within the Regional Park⁸;
- Growth and development of **8-10** new and existing assets within the Regional Park; and
- Drawing from the baseline, it is also suggest that the Partnership aims increases exposure and awareness of the Regional Park via the publication of articles in local, national and trade press. Over the next five years it should seek to **reach an audience of two million people**⁹. This should be considered during the construction of the Communications Plan.

7.25 To contextualise and provide a foundation to these economic potential targets, four strands of analyses have been undertaken:

- Firstly, based upon what is known about current local visitor attractions, future growth and investment plans have been assessed, along with the way in which these translate into potential additional visitor numbers for the Regional Park. The analysis also takes account of facilities which will open in the near future (e.g. Hesketh Bank, and Brockholes Wetlands and Woodlands Nature Reserve – which is currently just on the edge of the Regional Park boundary). This analysis indicates that these

⁶ These targets are an attempt to present an indicative target for the Partnership. Due to the lack of clear baseline data for some assets, particularly walking and cycling local visits and day visits within the Regional Park, a note of caution should be made as these estimates may include an element of double counting (e.g. Walking to Martin Mere, then along the new walking routes and then a visit to Marshside would fall into this category), or returning visitors.

⁷ This assumes that the partners focus upon consolidating the visitor profile which currently exists for the Regional Park (88% of visitors are day visitors, 4% stay with friends or relatives, 3% stay in non-serviced accommodation, and 6% stay in serviced accommodation). Spend per visitor type estimates have been derived from STEAM and have then been applied to the target visitor numbers by 2020 to estimate visitor expenditure.

⁸ Based upon an assumption from the STEAM model for the Ribble Coast and Wetland Regional Park that 1 FTE is supported by approximately £60,000 of visitor expenditure.

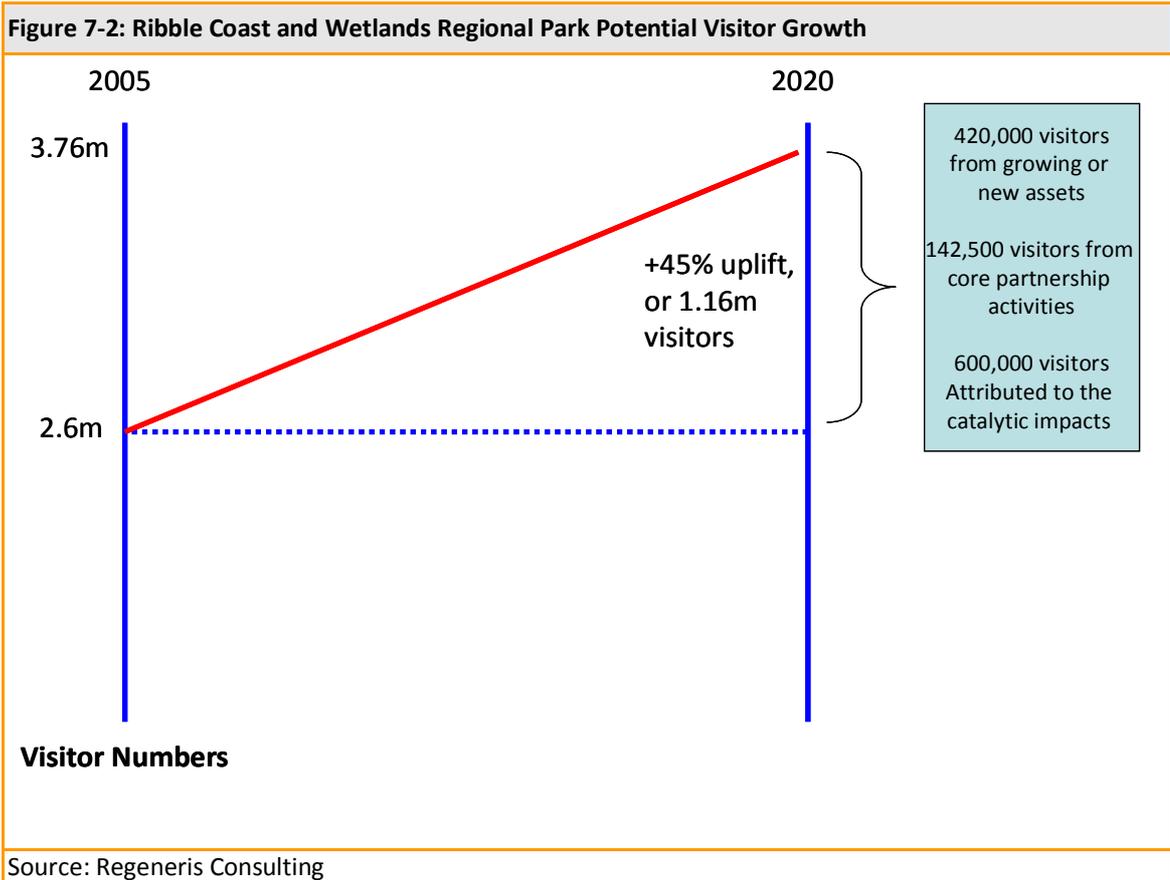
⁹ This can be calculated using circulation figures for local, national and trade press. This information can be found on www.abc.org.uk

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developments have the potential to contribute 420,000 additional visitors to the Regional Park by 2020.

- Secondly, based upon short-medium term activities identified within this business plan, a number of short case studies have been developed which present an overview of the potential contribution which these projects could make to achieve this target. This analysis indicates that these activities have the potential to contribute 142,500 additional visitors to the Regional Park by 2020. Evidence from a range of comparator parks, projects and research reports has been used in this assessment due to the limited project information currently available. The projects selected for case studies are:
 - The Douglas Crossing and route development along the Rufford Branch Canal from Burscough, and from Burscough to Banks via Martin Mere;
 - The development of a Public Arts Trail; and
 - The development of a Regional Park Festival programme.
- Thirdly, based upon an understanding of future events and resort enhancement/regeneration investments within the Regional Park (e.g. Golf 2012, St Annes, the Fairhaven Masterplan, and Preston's regeneration), and taking account of the likely increase in private sector investment in the area, catalytic impacts are included within the uplift estimates. It is estimated that these activities have the potential to contribute up to 600,000 visitors to the Regional Park by 2020. This is an achievable target given the scale and significance of these events/investments.
- Fourthly, the final strand of analysis involves comparing the uplift within the Ribble Coast and Wetlands to the scale of visitor metrics within other regional parks, with particular reference to the North Norfolk Coast.

7.26 Figure 7-2 illustrates how the economic potential of the Regional Park could be met by applying the strands of analyses set out above. This uplift in Regional Park visitors does not take into account the impact of the development of other regional parks within the North West. However, the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park should be able to differentiate itself from others within the region e.g. the Mersey Waterfront and the Weaver Valley.



Growth of Local Visitor Assets

- 7.27 There are a number of local visitor assets which have future growth plans which are likely to materialise in the near future (up to 2020). Moreover, there are also plans to open additional new attractions within the Regional Park, with some of these due to open in the near future.
- 7.28 There is scope for **approximately 420,000 additional visitors** to the Regional Park as a result of these growth plans, and approximately **36%** of the overall 2020 visitor target. This estimate can be broadly broken down into the following attractions:
- Brockholes Wetlands and Woodlands Nature Reserve is estimated to attract 250,000 visitors when fully operational¹⁰.
 - Martin Mere estimates that a further 85,000 visitors could be accommodated if its growth plans are followed through¹¹.
 - Mere Sands Wood could attract an additional 25,000 visitors as a result of its expansion plans¹².

¹⁰ The Wildlife Trust

¹¹ Martin Mere & West Lancashire Plain Feasibility Study, 2005

¹² West Lancashire Plain Feasibility Study, 2005

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- Marshside reserve could attract up to an additional 25,000 visitors with the development of new visitor centre¹³.
- Hesketh Out Marsh, currently being developed, is expected to attract 10,000 visitors¹⁴.
- Lytham Discovery Centre could increase its visitor numbers by 10,000 by 2020¹⁵.
- The expansion of Leisure Lakes with 49 new self-catering cabins can potentially attract an additional 8,500 visitors¹⁶.
- Windmill Farm – estimates that a further 6,000 visitors could be attracted to the farm once its growth plans are realised¹⁷.

Ribble Coast and Wetlands Projects – Case Studies

7.29 The following case studies present an overview of the potential economic contribution which the development of some of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands short-medium term activities could potentially have on the achievement of the proposed economic targets by 2020. The focus has been on the following three projects:

- Douglas Crossing and route development work from Burscough;
- The development of an Arts Trail within the Regional Park; and
- The development of a Regional Park Festival within the Regional Park.

7.30 The estimates below suggest that these projects have the potential to contribute approximately **142,500 additional visitors** to the regional park by 2020.

Figure 7-3 The Douglas Crossing and Route Development works

The development of the Douglas Crossing will enable continued access between coastal public rights of way within the Regional Park – something which has been an issue for walking and cycling visitors for a number of years. The development of a pedestrian/cycle bridge would enable users to continue their journeys in either direction on a more direct route without having to walk/cycle a considerable distance inland to cross the River Douglas.

The development of both new (addressing gaps in the route) and enhanced routes (e.g. improved surfaces, signage, drainage) within the Regional Park is another key activity to enhance the accessibility and offer of the Regional Park. Improvements to sections of routes between Burscough to Banks as well as Burscough to the River Douglas will enable users to access the proposed coastal trail, other public rights of way, and other assets (e.g. Martin Mere, Rufford Branch Canal).

¹³ RSPB

¹⁴ RSPB

¹⁵ RSPB

¹⁶ Based upon a family of four sharing a cabin, and an occupancy rate of 80% throughout the year.

¹⁷ Windmill Farm

It is estimated that these projects, along with the crossing, will provide approximately **23km of new or enhanced** public rights of way within the Regional Park when finally completed. There is no available local evidence which enables us to quantify the scale of the Regional Park's public rights of ways users as there have not been any robust surveys undertaken in recent years. The North West Coastal Trail project co-ordinator has also not undertaken a baseline assessment at this stage.

Therefore, using evidence from the Trans-Pennine Trail (TPT) – an extremely popular route amongst walkers and cyclists – we have derived estimates of potential users. The TPT is 346km in length and on average has 700,000 visitors per annum¹⁸. Therefore, there are approximately 2,000 visitors per km of the route. With the Ribble Coast and Wetlands routes being less well known nationally, and with other limitations on the ability of partners to attract similar volumes of visitors, it is estimated that a target of approximately 25% or 500 visits per km would be more appropriate. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that approximately **12,000 visitors** could potentially use the new bridge and routes.

This estimate is included within the wider targets for visitors to public rights of way within the Regional Park. It is anticipated that the Regional Park should aim to attract approximately **50,000 walkers** and **30,000 cyclists** per annum. The Peddars Way, a national trail within the North Norfolk AONB attracts 69,000 visitors each year, whilst Sustrans supported routes such as the Coast and Castles route, part of the North Sea cycle route, attracts almost 70,000 riders each year. By 2020 there is scope for the Ribble Coast and Wetlands to be on a similar trajectory as these other areas (most notably North Norfolk), and meet these targets through concerted efforts to improve access, marketing and maintenance of routes.

Figure 7-4 Public Arts Trail

The development of a Public Arts Trail within the Regional Park has the potential to act as a catalyst which could encourage a wider number of people to visit the Regional Park, as well as providing additional interest for existing local and day visitors who already use public rights of way within the park.

Art and sculpture trails are popular visitor and leisure attractions within the UK, allowing the visitor to interpret art and sculpture in an outdoor environment whilst undertaking exercise. There are several art and sculpture trails which we are aware of which anecdotally are popular with visitors. Established art and sculpture trails exist in the Grizedale Forest in the Lake District and within the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, whilst the Irwell Sculpture Trail is another trail within the North West. However, discussions with local agencies highlight the paucity of information on visitor numbers for these attractions. With limited resources survey work has not been undertaken at any of these trails. However, consultees were keen to stress the added value which the development of the trails brings, helping broaden the visitor offer.

However, evidence from the Bergh Apton sculpture trail in Norfolk in 2002 demonstrated the scale of impact a trail can have on a local economy and on local levels of community engagement¹⁹. Every three years the local arts group install the work of 50 artists across the village. The trail attracted over **8,000 visitors** over three weekends. Also Tatton Park in Cheshire held the One Tree sculpture event in 2004. With art/sculpture displayed throughout the park approximately **11,000 visitors** came to the park to view the work. In Lincolnshire the Living Earth Sculpture/Art trail was developed during 1997-1999. This trail attracted **12,000** visitors during this period.

¹⁸ Trans Pennine Trail Tourism & Marketing Study, 2005, Yorkshire Tourist Board

¹⁹ The Arts Council - Arts in Rural England, 2006

It could be argued that a number of the art/sculpture trails which we have evidence for are of a short-term nature. It is envisaged that the Ribble Coast and Wetlands trail would have both short-term and permanent exhibits. Short-term exhibits which vary in offer would help to keep the art-offer fresh, and help to attract different types of visitors. This could be particularly important if the art trail is to harness the environmental assets of the Regional Park. It is expected that designated trails of this nature within the Regional Park will attract approximately **10,000 additional visitors**. This figure reflects those visitors who have come primarily as a result of the art/sculpture trail, as opposed to taking account of all visits.

Figure 7-5 Regional Park Festival

Similarly to the development of art trails, the development of a Regional Park Festival will help position the park as a visitor destination in its own right within the region. The development of a festival or a programme of events has the potential to be an important tool for partners in helping to diversify the visitor base further, whilst also providing an opportunity to link visitor assets within the Park.

The business plan identifies several ideas for festivals or events including an arts-related event (with links to the proposed trail), a bird-watching festival, and/or further development of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands walking festival, which began in 2007. Evidence from similar festivals from other locations in the UK provides useful benchmarks for the level of visitors the Regional Park could reasonably expect to attract by 2020.

In the South West of England the Arts Council supported the Arts in the Protected Landscape project which brought art to over 45,000 people over almost 700 performances across 400 communities. This project received significant funding. However, with its focus on art and community engagement, a similar styled art event could reasonably expect to attract approximately 1,500 people²⁰.

The Wildfowl and Wetland Trust have been promoting bird watching festivals across its sites in Wales and in Slimbridge in England in recent years. The event in Slimbridge over one weekend has in recent years attracted approximately 5,000 visitors. Although heavily dependent on the prevailing weather conditions, it is expected that the Regional Park, with its well renowned bird offer, will be able to attract visitors of a similar scale to this if the event builds up over time and is well marketed.

There are many walking festivals across the UK. Relatively new walking festivals (those established in the last 2 years) which are typically 3 days to a week in length attract smaller numbers of visitors. In Redcar and also in Crickenwell walking festivals attract approximately 400-500 visitors. More established festivals such as the one held in Lincolnshire, which lasts for two weeks, can attract over 2,000 visitors. The Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park by 2020 could attract a similar number of visitors to its expanded walking festival.

There is also scope to build upon other assets within the Regional Park. The development of a waterways festival for canal boat users and leisure boaters focussed upon the River Ribble, the Rufford and Ribble Link Canals, as well as at marinas along the canals and at Preston. One festival which partners could aim to emulate is the 15 year old Rickmansworth Canal Festival in London on the Grand Union Canal. This festival attracts 15,000 visitors each year with a range of crafts, music and entertainment. A festival which focuses on local food and drink produce is another opportunity for partners to explore. For example, the Loch Lomond Shores food and drink festival attracts over 29,000 visitors each year. There could be scope for an established Regional Park food and drink

²⁰ Based upon 20 shows throughout communities within the regional park and 50 people per show.

festival to attract similar visitor numbers by 2020 if partners work collaboratively with local producers and the tourist board.

Based upon the series of ideas outlined above it is estimate that there is potential for the attraction of up to **52,500** festival / events visitors by 2020.

The Catalytic Impact

7.31 As part of the uplift and targets for the Regional Park, anticipated growth and investment plans for new, or improved assets within the Regional Park have been quantified, as well as possible visitor projects identified within the business plan. However, as part of the anticipated uplift in visitor numbers within the park by 2020 there is a significant element which has been labelled the Catalytic Impact. To provide greater insight into this element of the target, further detail is set out below on the type of activities which could play an important catalytic role in the development of the visitor economy by 2020.

- Firstly, the development of the North West's Golf Coast as well as the selection of Royal Lytham and St Annes as the host course for the 2012 Open Golf Championship will be a significant boost for the Regional Parks visitor economy, both up to and beyond due to the exposure the area will receive as a result of the coverage of the Open. Evidence from the Hoylake Open in Wirral in 2006 showed that the event attracted approximately 250,000 visitors as well as £4.2m worth of media coverage in UK newspapers²¹. Factoring in return visitors, as well as new visitors post tournament could raise these visitor impacts further.
- Secondly, the development of the Visitor Economy Pilot (VEP) and physical investments within St Annes, and the development of the Fairhaven Masterplan will be important drivers of future visitor growth within Lytham and St Annes. At present no visitor assessments have been undertaken. However, improvements to classic resort towns such as Lytham and St Annes will help sustain current users, as well as offer something different to new visitors.
- Thirdly, the on-going development and regeneration of Preston, and in particular Preston Docks as a leisure destination will be another key factor in driving forward the Regional Park's visitor economy. Preston is an important strategic gateway into the Regional Park and the enhancement of the city as a visitor destination will help to raise the profile of the park and highlight the important environmental assets which are located within close proximity to the City, including the waterways which run through it.

7.32 These activities alongside the investments within this business plan are likely to generate further private sector investment which in turn can impact upon visitors numbers.

Comparable Regional Parks

7.33 The North Norfolk AONB/Coastal area, with its bird and wildlife offer, attracts approximately:

²¹ <http://www.nwda.co.uk/news--events/press-releases/200701/englands-northwest-welcomes-20.aspx>

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- 400,000 overnight visitors,
 - 7.7million tourism visits, of which 2.2million are from outside of the local area.
 - £122million in visitor expenditure²².
- 7.34 The uplift in the number of visitors to the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park (approximately 1.16m visitors), equates to 3.76 million visitors each year by 2020. This is approximately 48% of all current visitors to the North Norfolk Coast. Bearing in mind that the North Norfolk Coast is a location which is an AONB and an established short and longer-break holiday destination, this is an ambitious but achievable target for partners.
- 7.35 Currently the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park has very limited media exposure in comparison to other Regional Parks within England, particularly the Lee Valley and the River Nene Regional Park – a park which has only been established in recent years. Based on their levels of exposure, the Ribble Coast and Wetlands should seek to gradually build up its media exposure.
- 7.36 It would be useful for partners to aim to target a mix of media over the next few years highlighting the Ribble Coast and Wetlands as a destination for visitors and/or promoting events as they take place and attractions as they develop/expand and open to the public. This would be determined by the communications plan. A strategy of highlighting the regional park as a visitor destination more generally could involve securing inclusion within national newspaper supplements (e.g. The Guardian’s Guide to Walks) or visitor/holiday editorials. The Guardian publishes ‘The Guardian Guide to Walks’. The 2007 edition was published in June. The guide was produced in conjunction with an organisation called Walkingworld Ltd. Their web site (which can be found at <http://www.walkingworld.com>) contains details of over 3,500 British walks. They also published a Guardian Guide to Cycling.
- 7.37 Overall, the Partnership should seek to reach an audience of 2 million people over the next five years via media coverage at the local and national level (the latter includes trade press). This is a challenging target. Nevertheless it is achievable if the Park features in a number of national guides, supplements and/or holiday editorials and works closely on an ongoing basis with local/regional press. The audience reached can be calculated using circulation figures.

Economic Potential Key Messages

- 7.38 The Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park has the potential to be an important driver in the development of the visitor economy within the area, but also as a catalyst for wider benefits as the Regional Park will increasingly be recognised for its quality of life benefits, and its proximity to key urban centres in the Region. There is scope by 2020 for the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park to attract significantly more visitors and place itself on a similar trajectory to other regional parks/areas within the UK, notably North Norfolk and the River Nene.
- 7.39 The baseline assessment outlines the current economic position of the Regional Park.

²² RSPB, Valuing the North Norfolk Coast, 1999.

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However, our research indicates that there is the potential for uplift in visitor numbers within the park of approximately 45% from 2005 levels of 2.6million. Whilst this is an ambitious target, it is not unachievable in light of the current and future projects and growth plans for visitor assets within the Regional Park. Therefore the following points highlight the key economic potential targets for the Regional Park by 2020:

- To attract **1.16m** more visitors to the Regional Park – our research suggests that approximately **50%** of this growth can be accounted for by growth plans for existing visitor assets, or by the development of a number of the Partnership’s core projects by 2020.
- The additional visitors to the Regional Park will generate an additional **£47.9m** in visitor expenditure for the local economy. This will mean that visitor expenditure will have increased from £107m in 2005 to £154.9m by 2020 – an increase of 45%.
- Increased visitor expenditure also supports employment within a local economy. We estimate, based upon the assumption that 1FTE job is supported by every £60,000 of visitor expenditure, an additional **801 direct FTE jobs** will be supported within the Regional Park.
- To work directly with local visitor assets and to develop **8-10** new, or existing assets within the Regional Park. With many of the attractions having growth aspirations it will be important for the achievement of these targets that these can be met.
- To increase exposure and awareness of the Regional Park via the publication of articles in local, national and trade press. Over the next five years it should seek to **reach an audience of two million people**.

7.40 There are also a wide range of less tangible benefits which do not sit within these targets but would also result from investment in the Regional Park. Regional parks have the ability to enhance the liveability of locations and as such help to retain and attract skilled labour for the benefit of local and investing businesses. Therefore the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park will play an important role in helping Preston and the surrounding area to develop as a location for knowledge based workers. In terms of wider social benefits, the Regional Park will form an effective means by which to aid community cohesion, engender a greater sense of local pride, generate significant health and well-being benefits, and provide an educational resource.

8. Implementation Plan

8.1 In order to implement this business plan, this chapter sets out the practical steps required immediately (over the next 6 months), over the short term (the subsequent 18 months) and over the medium term (the three years thereafter). These steps are captured in the following Implementation Plan. The plan sets out the tasks to be undertaken and the responsibility for these tasks. In the short term there are three tasks highlighted in italics. These should be completed, if possible, before the end of December 2008 as they are fundamental to progress.

Table 8-1: Implementation Plan	
Task	Responsibility
Immediate Activities - [April - Oct 2008]	
<i>Partnership Development</i>	
<p>1. Develop new terms of reference which reflect the recommendations and tasks within this business plan. These terms should set out the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role and responsibilities for each group; • Reporting requirements; • Proposed composition (i.e. what type of expertise, which organisations and at what level); • The role of the Chair; • Frequency and timing of meetings; and • For the Strategic Group, voting/quorum rights. <p>Terms of reference are required for the new strategic group (herein referred to as the Strategic Steering Group) and each of the sub groups (access, marketing and new arts group)</p>	Business Plan Working Group
<p>2. Steering Group Meeting. Agenda should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to sign off new terms of reference (including composition) and the business plan, • individuals nominated to approach any new members for the Strategic group and lead on convening the first meeting, and • individuals nominated to communicate to the access and marketing groups their new terms of reference. 	Existing Steering Group
<p>3. New terms of reference communicated to the existing sub groups</p>	Nominated individual(s) from the existing Steering Group

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4. Any new members approached, including the new Chair	Nominated individual(s) from the existing Steering Group
5. Develop job specification and line management arrangements for the Programme Manager and the admin support post	Nominated individual(s) from the existing Steering Group
6. Information pack (Vision doc, business plan, terms of reference, job specifications, access and public arts briefs) to be issued to new strategic steering group and first meeting arranged	Nominated individual(s) from the existing Steering Group
7. First strategic meeting. Agenda is likely to be fairly substantial in order to initiate a number of activities. Likely to cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sign off of job specifications; • An approach to ascertaining revenue funding for posts agreed; • Reflect on the schedule of strategies / plans in production and come to a view on any immediate briefing; sessions which should be arranged; • Brief for Access Strategy to be signed off; • Brief for Public Arts Feasibility Study to be reviewed/signed off; and • Boundary issue to be reviewed. 	Strategic Steering Group
8. Secure funding for posts [using approach agreed at the previous meeting].	Strategic Steering Group
9. Advertise and recruit Programme Manager and Administrative support	Strategic Steering Group
Concept Promotion and Positioning	
10. Schedule of documents to be reviewed and developed - set up meeting with senior individuals involved in those currently underway to discuss the RCW Regional Park. [This should be reviewed at the first strategic meeting and feed into the Communications Plan].	Nominated individual(s) from the existing Steering Group
Access and Infrastructure	
11. Access Strategy: Develop brief for the Access Strategy [In advance of the first strategic group meeting]	Access sub group (signed off by the Steering Group)
Flagship Attractions	
12. Regional Park Festival: Continue to co-ordinate existing programme of events within the Regional Park area	Action Ribble Estuary Co-ordinator.
13. Public Arts Trail: Set up an Arts Sub Group to take this project forwards [Based on the terms of reference	Strategic Steering Group

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signed off by (existing) Steering Group]	
14. Public Arts Trail: Develop brief for the feasibility study [In advance of the first strategic meeting].	Arts Sub Group (to be signed off by the Strategic Steering Group)
15. Public Arts Trail: Commission feasibility study	Arts Sub Group
Short Term - [Oct 2008 - March 2010]	
Partnership Development	
16. Business plan update Mar 2009 and Mar 2010 [likely to involve any new projects emerging from the Access Strategy, any plans to develop the Regional Park Festival]	Programme Manager
17. Business plan sign off	Strategic Steering Group
18. Annual monitoring report to co-incide with business plan update	Programme Manager
Concept Promotion and Positioning	
19. <i>The development a Communication Plan - This plan should set out the target audiences, the messages the Partnership wishes to convey, and the most effective means by which to do this. The focus will be on internal audiences (i.e. those who will be instrumental in developing and delivering the Regional Park). The branding and promotion workshop should be undertaken as part of this task (see below)</i>	<i>Developed by the Programme Manager in conjunction with the Marketing Sub Group. It should be signed off by the Steering Group prior to implementation.</i>
20. Implement Communications Plan	Programme Manager
Access and Infrastructure	
21. Access Strategy: Secure funding	Strategic Steering Group and Programme Manager in conjunction with the Access Sub Group
22. Access Strategy: Commission Access Strategy	Access sub group
23. North West Coastal Trail: Attend NWCT meetings	Programme Manager
24. Route Development: Burscough to Banks route development: identify and secure funding for the completion of the first section and the necessary feasibility work for section 4 of this route	Access sub group
25. Route Development: Rufford Branch route development: establish the case for developing Section 3	Access sub group
26. Gateway Development – St Annes: Attend any Steering Groups / Working Groups set up for the	Programme Manager

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development of St Annes	
Flagship Attractions	
27. Douglas Crossing: Discussions with REMADE to identify how project development and delivery should be taken forwards - ie. lead organisation	Programme Manager to discuss, Strategic Steering Group to agree
28. Douglas Crossing: Identify potential funding sources and support development of funding applications for the bridge	Programme Manager
29. Regional Park Festival: Look at the options for expanding / enhancing the existing programme of events	Programme Manager and (Marketing sub group)
30. Public Arts Trail: Identify and secure funding	Strategic Steering Group and Programme Manager in conjunction with the Arts Sub Group
31. Public Arts Trail: Appoint project manager	Arts Sub Group (Subject to sign off from the Steering Group an accountabe body for the project)
32. Public Arts Trail: Commence commissioning process	Arts Sub Group
33. Fairhaven Masterplan: Develop a brief for the work required	Strategic Steering Group to determine whether a group should be set up to take forwards
34. Fairhaven Masterplan: Identify and secure funding to undertake work	Strategic Steering Group and Programme Manager
35. Fairhaven Masterplan: Commission	To be determined
36. Hesketh Out Marsh: Attend planning meetings	Programme Manager
Raising Public Awareness	
37. Community Engagement: Enter into discussions with those involved in engagement activities within and beyond the Regional Park to identify how existing programme can be expanded	Programme Manager
38. <i>Tourism Promotion: Secure necessary funding for the marketing budget</i>	<i>Strategic Steering Group and Programme Manage</i>

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39. Tourism Promotion: Branding and promotion workshop. This should be done as part of developing the communications plan.	Strategic Steering Group, Programme Manager and Marketing Steering Group
40. Tourism Promotion: Continue to develop promotional materials [To be undertaken once there is clarity around branding and promotion as agreed at the workshop].	Marketing sub group
41. Tourism Promotion: Complete and maintain website [Again, to be undertaken once there is clarity around branding and promotion as agreed at the workshop].	Sub contracted / Programme Manager
42. Tourism Promotion: Review opportunities to link into other promotional initiatives, particularly with respect to the opening of Brockholes, the 2012 Golf and Blackpool	Marketing sub group
Medium Term [April 2010 to March 2013]	
Partnership Development	
43. Business plan update Mar 2011, Mar 2012 and Mar 2013	Programme Manager
44. Business plan sign off	Strategic Steering Group
45. Annual monitoring report to co-incide with business plan update	Programme Manager
Concept Promotion and Positioning	
46. Continue to implement Communications Plan	Programme Manager
Access and Infrastructure	
47. Route Development: Burscough to Banks route development: seek to develop Sections 2, 3 and 4	Access sub group
48. Route Development: Rufford Branch route development: Seek to develop sections 2 and 3,	Access sub group
49. North West Coastal Trail: Attend NWCT meetings	Programme Manager
50. Gateway Development – St Annes: Attend any Steering Groups / Working Groups set up for the development of St Annes	Programme Manager
Flagship Attractions	
51. Douglas Crossing: Tasks will determined by which organisation takes the lead	
52. Regional Park Festival: Identify / secure funding / resources to develop the project as identified previously	Programme Manager and (Marketing sub group)
53. Public Arts Trail: Development phase (construction and ongoing commissioning)	Arts Sub Group and Project Manager

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54. Fairhaven Masterplan: Seek to progress the agreed masterplan	Strategic Steering Group to determine whether a group should be set up to take forwards
Raising Public Awareness	
55. Community Engagement: Continue to build upon the programme of engagement activities via working with organisations responsible for delivering this activity within and beyond the Regional Park	Programme Manager
56. Tourism Promotion: Update promotional materials	Marketing sub group
57. Tourism Promotion: Maintain website	Sub contracted / Programme Manager
58. Tourism Promotion: Continue to link into other promotional initiatives, maximising the potential of the 2012 golf	Marketing sub group

The background features a dynamic pattern of blue light trails that curve and swirl across the page. Interspersed among these trails are several semi-transparent white squares of varying sizes, some of which are partially obscured by the light trails. The overall effect is one of motion and energy.

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