

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee



# Agenda

## Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Friday, 11 April 2014, 10.00 am**  
**Council Chamber, Malvern**

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## DISCLOSING INTERESTS

There are now 2 types of interests:  
**'Disclosable pecuniary interests'** and **'other disclosable interests'**

### WHAT IS A 'DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST' (DPI)?

- Any **employment**, office, trade or vocation carried on for profit or gain
- **Sponsorship** by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party of your member or election expenses
- Any **contract** for goods, services or works between the Council and you, a firm where you are a partner/director, or company in which you hold shares
- Interests in **land** in Worcestershire (including licence to occupy for a month or longer)
- **Shares** etc (with either a total nominal value above £25,000 or 1% of the total issued share capital) in companies with a place of business or land in Worcestershire.

**NB** Your DPIs include the interests of your **spouse/partner** as well as you

### WHAT MUST I DO WITH A DPI?

- **Register** it within 28 days **and**
- **Declare** it where you have a DPI in a matter at a particular meeting
  - you must **not participate** and you **must withdraw**.

**NB** It is a criminal offence to participate in matters in which you have a DPI

### WHAT ABOUT 'OTHER DISCLOSABLE INTERESTS'?

- No need to register them but
- You must **declare** them at a particular meeting where:  
You/your family/person or body with whom you are associated have a **pecuniary interest** in or **close connection** with the matter under discussion.

### WHAT ABOUT MEMBERSHIP OF ANOTHER AUTHORITY OR PUBLIC BODY?

You will not normally even need to declare this as an interest. The only exception is where the conflict of interest is so significant it is seen as likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.

### DO I HAVE TO WITHDRAW IF I HAVE A DISCLOSABLE INTEREST WHICH ISN'T A DPI?

Not normally. You must withdraw only if it:

- affects your **pecuniary interests** OR relates to a **planning or regulatory** matter
- **AND** it is seen as likely to **prejudice your judgement** of the public interest.

### DON'T FORGET

- If you have a disclosable interest at a meeting you must **disclose both its existence and nature** – 'as noted/recorded' is insufficient
- **Declarations must relate to specific business** on the agenda
  - General scattergun declarations are not needed and achieve little
- Breaches of most of the **DPI provisions** are now **criminal offences** which may be referred to the police which can on conviction by a court lead to fines up to £5,000 and disqualification up to 5 years
- Formal **dispensation** in respect of interests can be sought in appropriate cases.

**Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee**  
**Friday, 11 April 2014, 10.00 am, Malvern Hills District Council**

**Members:**

**Elected Members**

Prof J Raine (Chairman)  
Mr P Bettington (Vice Chairman)  
Mrs N Carless  
Mr C Cheeseman  
Mr J Fryman  
Mr A Johnson  
Dr K Pollock  
Mrs G Rees  
Mr P Tuthill  
Mr R Yeates

**Non-Elected Members:**

Mr M Ashton  
Mr W Barnes  
Prof. R Bryant  
  
Mr I George  
Ms D Griffiths  
Mr J Hervey-Bathurst  
Mr F Hill  
Ms S Faulkner

**Co-opted Members:**

Mr A Lee

Malvern Hills District Council  
Herefordshire Council  
Herefordshire Association of Local Councils  
Malvern Hills District Council  
Worcestershire Association of Local Councils  
Herefordshire Council  
Worcestershire County Council  
Malvern Hills Conservators  
Worcestershire County Council  
Forest of Dean District Council (also representing Gloucestershire County Council)  
  
Visit Herefordshire/Destination Worcestershire Forestry Commission  
Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust  
English Heritage  
Natural England  
Country Landowners and Business Association  
Campaign to Protect Rural England  
National Farmers Union  
  
Herefordshire Local Access Forum

**Agenda**

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Date of Issue: 27 March 2014

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## 6. UPDATE ON PLANNING ISSUES

### Background

1. There have been delays in achieving a full Local Plan coverage for the AONB, and whilst these plans are being developed, national policy and guidance is having an increasing influence on policy and planning decisions. Government policy to increase housing is putting increased pressure on greenfield land both in and around the AONB. The AONB Unit continues to input to consultations on planning matters. As well as responding to consultations on Local Plans and other strategic documents it responds to approximately 15 planning applications per year in the AONB and its setting.

### Summary

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2. The NPPF was published in March 2012 with the aim of boosting the number of houses permitted through the planning system. Since then, the NPPF has gradually started to take more priority over policies in local plans, unless an up-to-date plan is in place, as is the case in Forest of Dean District.
3. Section 49 of the NPPF has become a key policy in relation to planning decisions. This states that "*Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites*". Where a five year supply cannot be demonstrated, as is currently the case in Malvern Hills District and Herefordshire, then national policy takes precedence. This requires applications to be approved unless the environmental harm clearly outweighs the social and economic benefits. As councils and planning inspectors are increasingly giving great weight to the shortage of housing land in terms of social and economic benefits, the case for refusing applications based on environmental harm is becoming increasingly difficult.
4. The main sections of the NPPF relating to AONBs are sections 115 and 116. Section 115 requires great weight to



be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty whilst section 116 relates to major developments. There has been some uncertainty nationally as to what constitutes a major development in an AONB and therefore whether exceptional circumstances and public interest have to be demonstrated. The matter has not been resolved by the publication of the National Planning Practice Guidance (see below).

5. A recent High Court decision relating to a major development in the Cornwall AONB provided some clarification as to the approach that should be taken –

*“51. Where an application is made for a development in an AONB, the relevant committee or other planning decision-makers are required to take into account and weigh all material considerations. However, as I have explained above (paragraph 6), the NPPF places the conservation of the landscape and scenic beauty of an AONB into a special category of material consideration: as a matter of policy paragraph 115 requires it to be given “great weight”, and paragraph 116 of the NPPF requires permission for a major development such as this in an AONB to be refused save in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated the proposed development is in the public interest. In coming to a determination of such a planning application under this policy, the committee are therefore required, not simply to weigh all material considerations in a balance, but to refuse an application unless they are satisfied that (i) there are exceptional circumstances, and (ii) it is demonstrated that, despite giving great weight to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty in the AONB, the development is in the public interest.” Queen/Mevagissey Parish Council v Cornwall Council (Case No CO/6597/2013)*

### **National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**

6. This new practice guidance was published in March 2014 and covered a wide variety of planning issues. The two key questions included relating to AONBs are as follows –
7. How is major development defined in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, for the purposes of the consideration of planning applications in these areas?

*“Planning permission should be refused for major*



*development in a National Park, the Broads or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest. Whether a proposed development in these designated areas should be treated as a major development, to which the policy in paragraph 116 of the Framework applies, will be a matter for the relevant decision taker, taking into account the proposal in question and the local context. The Framework is clear that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in these designated areas irrespective of whether the policy in paragraph 116 is applicable.”*

8. Does planning need to take account of management plans for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

*“Planning policies and decisions should be based on up-to-date information about the natural environment and other characteristics of the area. As part of this, local planning authorities and neighbourhood planning bodies should have regard to management plans for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as these documents underpin partnership working and delivery of designation objectives. The management plans highlight the value and special qualities of these designations to society and show communities and partners how their activity contributes to protected landscape purposes.*

*National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty management plans do not form part of the statutory development plan, but may contribute to setting the strategic context for development by providing evidence and principles, which should be taken into account in the local planning authorities’ Local Plans and any neighbourhood plans in these areas.*

*National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty management plans may also be material considerations in making decisions on individual planning applications, where they raise relevant issues.”*



## **Barn Conversions exemption in AONBs and National Parks**

9. In order to boost housing numbers in rural areas the Government plans to relax the planning rules in relation to converting agricultural barns to residential developments by classifying this activity as Permitted Development. However, a Ministerial Statement in March 2014 has confirmed that AONBs, along with National Parks, will be exempt from this measure. The statement says -

*“We recognise the importance to the public of safeguarding environmentally protected areas, so this change of use will not apply in Article 1(5) land, for example National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, we expect national parks and other local planning authorities to take a positive and proactive approach to sustainable development, balancing the protection of the landscape with the social and economic wellbeing of the area. National Parks and other protected areas are living communities whose young people and families need access to housing if their communities are to grow and prosper. I would note that a prior approval process will allow for flooding issues to be addressed.”*

10. The Ministerial Statement also confirmed that proposed permitted development rights to convert shops to residential use will not apply in AONBs.

## **Local Planning Policy**

### **Herefordshire Local Plan**

11. The Herefordshire Local Plan is currently at the pre – submission stage. A pre-submission draft of the Core Strategy was approved by the Full Council on 19 July 2013. This included amendments from the consultation in March and April 2013, which was reported to the JAC in April last year. The Council is also proposing Development Plan Documents on Gypsies and Travellers and Natural Resources, which encompasses minerals and waste, renewable energy etc.
12. The most recent Local Development Scheme, published in January 2014 sets out the proposed timetable for the production of key planning documents.

Core Strategy –





Pre-submission publication – winter 2013

Submission – spring 2014

Public Examination – summer 2014

Inspectors Report – autumn 2014

Adoption – autumn 2014

Natural Resources Development Plan Document –

Public Consultation on Issues and Options – winter 2014/15

Public consultation on proposals - spring 2015

Final round of consultation – summer 2015

Council Approval of Submission Document – autumn 2015

Pre-submission publicity – winter 2015/16

Submission – spring 2016

Public Examination – summer 2016

Inspector's Report – autumn 2016

Adoption – autumn 2016

Community Infrastructure Levy -

Draft charging schedule consultation - winter 2013

Council approval for examination - spring 2014

Public Examination - summer 2014

Inspector's Report - autumn 2014

Adoption - autumn 2014

### **South Worcestershire Development Plan**

13. The South Worcestershire Development Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State and is now at the Examination stage. At the Examination in October 2013, the Inspector asked the three Councils to reconsider their housing numbers with a view to adding a further 4000 houses to the plan. This has delayed the Examination process. The Councils have submitted further evidence to the Inspector relating to the economic case for increasing housing numbers. This evidence supports the Inspector's proposed figure. The Examination is due to be re-opened on 13 and 14 March where evidence will be heard relating to revised housing numbers. Developers will also be invited to put forward potential new sites for allocation in the plan. It is not known at this stage whether any further



sites are proposed in the AONB. A further consultation is proposed on the main modifications in spring 2014.

14. Revised  
Timetable –

Submission to the Secretary of State for examination  
- May 2013

Phase 1 Examination Hearings and publication of  
Inspectors interim findings - Oct/ Nov 2013

Phase 2 Examination Hearings (tbc) - Early 2014

Consultation on main modifications if required -  
Spring 2014

Receipt of the Inspectors Report - June 2014

Adopt plan - September 2014 (latest)

15. Amendments have been proposed and the currently  
proposed wording of the AONB policy is as follows –

**SWDP 23 The Cotswolds and Malvern Hills Areas of  
Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

*A. Development that would have a detrimental impact  
on the natural beauty of the AONB (as shown on the  
Policies Map) will not be permitted.*

*B. Within the AONB, any development proposal must  
conserve and enhance the special qualities of the  
landscape. For development outwith but affecting the  
AONB, regard will be had to the purpose of  
conserving and enhancing its natural beauty.*

*C. Development proposals should have regard to the  
most up-to-date approved AONB Management  
Plans.*

16. This has incorporated a wording change we suggested in  
our previous comments.

17. The main comments previously made were in relation to  
Policy SWDP52 and in particular to Site SWDP52/3,  
former playing fields, Green Lane, Malvern Wells. The site  
is still included as an allocation in the Submission Draft  
forwarded to the Inspector.

**Forest of Dean Local Development Framework**



18. The Forest of Dean Core Strategy was adopted in February 2012. The latest stage in the emerging Allocations Development Plan Document was that officers' recommendations on changes were approved by Full Council in May 2013. These allocations are unlikely to affect the AONB.

### **Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan**

19. The AONB Unit submitted comments on the Second Consultation in January 2014. The main concerns were as follows -

- After many years of restraint, it would appear that the Malvern Hills are now being considered for the extraction of crushed rock. Whilst we appreciate that this type of material is only found in the Malvern Hills and Bredon Hill in Worcestershire it seems a drastic measure to consider mineral extraction in the two AONBs in the county. The AONB Partnership would be likely to oppose any proposal for crushed rock extraction within the AONB and in any case such activity is likely to be contrary to the Malvern Hills Acts.
- It is unclear from the plan as to what alternatives have been considered, either in terms of using an alternative material or in considering sites outside the county. With the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities this issue needs to be considered on a regional or national basis to avoid irreparable damage to nationally protected landscapes.
- The scale of extraction proposed is quite large with 1.6m tonnes being proposed over 10 years. It is hard to see how this could be accommodated without causing significant harm to landscape character and natural beauty.
- Setting aside the Parliamentary Acts which cover the Malvern Hills, for developments to be allowed they would need to satisfy the requirements of sections 115 and 116 of the NPPF. It would need to be shown that great weight had been given to the AONB and that any development could demonstrate exceptional circumstances and be in the public interest. The issue of public interest is particularly important in such a popular area for visitors and for recreation. Under



section 116 it will be essential to demonstrate that the same provision could not be made outside the AONB, including in adjoining counties. The NPPF makes clear that the presence of an AONB is one of the issues that can override the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It is also hard to see how developments with the potential to cause so much harm to landscapes could be considered to be sustainable. We would expect the harm to a nationally important landscape to always clearly outweigh the benefits of development.

- On a positive note, the AONB Partnership is very pleased to see green infrastructure and landscape character put at the heart of the proposed approach. Overall the approach is a very good one. More emphasis could be put on assessing visual impacts to ensure that the scenic beauty of the AONB and its setting is conserved and enhanced.
- The AONB Partnership has previously raised the issue of small scale extraction of local building stone and this is included in the strategic objectives of the current Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan (objective DO1). We are pleased to see that the issue of extracting stone for local repair has been included in the plan, although it appears to be restricted to the safeguarding section rather than the extraction proposals.

### **Neighbourhood Development Plans**

20. The Localism Act of 2011 allows local communities to shape new development by coming together to produce Neighbourhood Plans. These plans give local people a strong voice on issues such as where development takes place and what it looks like. A number of local communities in the Malvern Hills AONB are currently working towards the preparation of these plans or are on the verge of doing so. These include Colwall, Cradley and Ledbury in Herefordshire and Malvern Wells and Welland and Little Malvern in Worcestershire. The AONB Unit is supporting and working with local communities in this process. We are keen to ensure that relevant parts of AONB policy and guidance are incorporated within Neighbourhood Plans since these will be statutory documents once they are approved.

### **Planning Applications in the AONB**



21. The five year land supply issue referred to above is putting increasing pressure on greenfield land in the AONB and its setting. There have been a number of cases where development proposals have been refused by local planning authorities and then approved on appeal, based largely on a local or national shortage of housing. As a result of the numbers of appeals approved it has become more difficult for local authorities to refuse applications and an increasing number are being approved.
22. A number of large developments have recently been approved outside but close to the AONB boundary. These include 50 houses at Drake Street in Welland, 92 houses at Pickersleigh Grove and 63 Houses at Mill Lane, Guarlford. These are all visible from the Hills and have views towards the Hills. The impacts on the AONB have been considered to be insufficient to outweigh the benefits of achieving an increased housing supply for Malvern Hills District.
23. Within the AONB, the AONB Unit has recently objected to a development of 24 houses at Marlbrook Road, Welland (ref 13/01388/FUL). We were concerned about the loss of an area of greenfield land in the AONB, especially when there are alternative sites nearby which were outside the AONB. Approval here could set a precedent for further development in the AONB. The key issue here is weighing the five year supply/district need for housing against harm to the AONB. The Council has considered that need at a District level is a good reason for recommending approval. At the time of writing (12th March) the Council is seeking legal advice as to whether this is a major development and thereby subject to section 116 of the NPPF.
24. A decision is still outstanding on the proposed development of 184 houses on land within the AONB at Hanley Road North. An application for 45 houses at Hanley Road South was withdrawn but may be resubmitted as it is still included in the South Worcestershire Development Plan.
25. Permission has recently been granted for 12 houses on land at Brookmill Close, Colwall. The AONB Unit was concerned that this development would lead to the loss of a locally-valuable greenfield site which is outside the recognised settlement boundary for the village. It would also have a negative impact on the landscape character of



the settlement. Insufficient justification had been made for the need for the development and whether there are alternative sites within the settlement boundary that could serve the same purpose. The main reasons for approval were local need for both market and affordable housing.

26. The AONB Unit recently made some detailed comments on a proposed manege and agricultural building at Eight Oaks, Castlemorton (13/01480/FUL). These focussed on the settlement pattern and materials proposed when considered against the Guidance on Building Design. The application was subsequently refused on AONB grounds.

#### **Training for Local Planning Authorities**

27. On 17 April 2014 the AONB will be facilitating a half-day workshop for planning staff at Malvern Hills District Council and Forest of Dean District Council. This will include presentations about the AONB, current policies and guidance, and discussions on current topics of mutual interest. This approach has also been extended to Herefordshire Council. . There is also potential to run workshops for councillors if that is considered useful.

#### **Recommendation**

28. **The Committee is recommended to:**

- a) Note the current developments in national planning policy and guidance; and**
- b) Note the progress in relation to strategic planning in Herefordshire, Forest of Dean and South Worcestershire; and**
- c) Note the recent planning applications relating to the AONB.**
- d) Discuss any issues arising from the above.**



**Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee**  
**11 April 2014**

**7. ANCIENT WOODLAND RESTORATION IN HEREFORDSHIRE AND WEST WORCESTERSHIRE**

**Background**

1. Ancient trees, forests and woodlands provide a unique link to our past. Ancient woodland is land that has been continually wooded since at least AD1600; some ancient woodland may even be a link back to the original "Wildwood" that covered the country around 10,000 years ago after the last ice age. Today, it contributes substantially to our natural and cultural heritage.
2. Ancient woodland is one of the country's most precious habitats. It is scarce and irreplaceable and supports 232 of the rarest and most vulnerable species. However, ancient woodland is under increasing threat and today covers only 2% of the UK (around 450,000ha), making it a priority within the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan for preservation and restoration.
3. Despite widespread coniferisation of much ancient woodland following WWII, research by Oxford University and the Woodland Trust has shown that some remnant features of the ancient woodland habitat can survive. By slowly removing shading conifers and enabling light to gradually penetrate the woodland canopy, specialist species can be encouraged to recover from their fragile state and reverse years of damage.

**Summary**

4. The Woodland Trust has recently secured £1.9 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund to fund a four year project to restore ancient woodlands in ten priority areas around the UK. One of these ten areas is Herefordshire and West Worcestershire, including the Malvern Hills AONB. The aim of the project is to work with a wide range of landowners and organisations to help establish positive management and restoration techniques that will deliver healthy, thriving restored ancient woodlands and a range of benefits for people too. It is hoped that the project will signify a "step change" in the level of ancient woodland restoration activity across the UK.
5. A project officer has been appointed to each of the ten restoration areas. His/her job will be to liaise with private



landowners, carry our surveys and provide encouragement, advice and support towards appropriate woodland management. There is no money within the project to pay for practical management works and it is hoped that financial support for this will come through avenues such as the New Environment Land Management Schemes (NELMS) and possible income from timber extracted as part of the restoration process.

6. Within the Herefordshire and West Worcestershire Project area it is estimated that 56% (9,232ha) of ancient woodland has been coniferised to some extent. On the basis of survey work carried out 82% of this area has been described as 'threatened'. Within this area it is expected that 2,000 ha of coniferised ancient woodland will be assessed and that 800ha will be in active restoration management by the end of the project.
7. The Project Officer in this area is called Jeremy Evans. He is being hosted by the Forestry Commission in the Worcester office. Staff from the AONB Unit have already met with Jeremy to discuss opportunities for joint working and supporting this initiative, in the hope of seeing some new management of ancient woodland in the AONB.

## **Recommendation**

8. **The Committee is recommended to:**
  - a) **Note the ancient woodland restoration project which is just beginning in this area; and**
  - b) **Suggest or offer to help identify possible woodlands and woodland owners in the AONB who might be interested in receiving further information about the project and/or advice.**





# Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

11 April 2014

## 8. MAKING SPACE FOR NATURE IN THE MALVERN HILLS AONB- A PROJECT TO CONSERVE AND ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY AT A LANDSCAPE SCALE

### Background

1. It is now widely accepted that improving the lot of biodiversity requires a change in conservation management from that which has been traditionally pursued. Key elements of this change include a shift away from focussing heavily on 'high value' sites such as nature reserves and SSSIs towards a more integrated, large-scale approach, commonly known as the 'landscape scale'. An often articulated aspiration is the creation of a landscape that has bigger wildlife sites of better quality, which are more joined-up and which support more species and individuals. These shifts in thought and approach are embedded in the Natural Environment White Paper (2011) and in the England Biodiversity Strategy 2020.
2. In 2013 the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) UK Committee reaffirmed the Category V status<sup>1</sup> of all AONBs. This confirms the significant impact AONBs have on conserving the UK's biodiversity, but the reaffirmation is also based on a commitment from AONB Partnerships to continue to deliver for biodiversity. At a national level, Defra has recently made it clear that it expects AONBs, as large protected areas, to be at the vanguard of biodiversity conservation at a landscape scale.
3. The Malvern Hills AONB is blessed in containing one of the largest areas of contiguous semi-natural habitat in the West Midlands. Owned and managed for conservation and access by the Malvern Hills Conservators, the Malvern Hills and Commons cover 3000 acres (11% of the AONB) of grassland, scrub, woodland etc. Much of this land is of national importance for wildlife, as recognised through its designation as a SSSI. The extensive nature of the land holding only adds to its significance, making it of particular importance for certain species. For example, the Malvern Hills hold one of the largest adder populations in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> The IUCN define a Category V Protected Landscape as "An area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity".



## Summary

4. Surrounding the Malvern Hills and Commons in the AONB is a large number of land holdings, ranging from the very large (Eastnor Estate covers 5000 acres) to the very small. These holdings are variable in their appearance and in the manner and intensity of their management. Whilst food production and profit is a key motivating factor it is by no means the driving force behind all management. For example, recent statistics show that Environmental Stewardship agreements now apply to 82% of all eligible land in the AONB.
5. Whilst most land in the AONB is privately owned there are also significant holdings (in addition to that of the Conservators) which are owned and managed by the public and charitable sectors, sometimes with nature conservation as a key objective. One such land holding is Hollybed Farm, recently acquired by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and comprising 42 acres of grassland, native hedgerow and traditional orchard. This site is currently part of the Trust's halo project in which attempts are made to contact, support and work alongside those managing land adjacent to certain nature reserves, in order to influence management regimes for the benefit of wildlife in the wider area.
6. The Malvern Hills AONB Unit is working in partnership with others to develop a landscape-scale biodiversity project in the AONB. The aim of the project is: *To improve, in a selective and targeted manner, the connectivity, buffering and management of a mosaic of habitats in a pre-defined 'landscape scale' area, in order to benefit a range of locally characteristic and significant species.*
7. The proposed area for this project has the ridge of the Malvern Hills as its western boundary and runs approximately 3km to the East of this line. The northern and southern boundaries are in line with the northern and southern limit of the Malvern Hills. For the purpose of this project the defined area is intended to be flexible.
8. The project area lies within a much wider zone of 13 parishes which was once known as the Malvern Chase. It is an area of current and former commons which sit on poor soils. Grassland (of varying quality) is the main habitat and stock grazing is the main land use, alongside some arable cropping. Mature and veteran trees, hedgerows, scrub, traditional orchards and small woods are all recognisable elements of the landscape within the project area.
9. This project is still in its very early stages but the following



partners have been involved in discussions and are likely to play a role in its delivery: the AONB Unit, Malvern Hills Conservators, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, University of Worcester, Natural England.

10. **Delivering the project** - A significant amount of work will need to be carried out before the project aim can be realised. The work can be broken down into two clear, sequential stages.
11. Stage 1- data gathering, mapping and assessment work. Table 1 contains a provisional list of such tasks, together with a status assessment.
12. Stage 2 – using data collected during stage 1, hold discussions with landowners and those bodies which may be able to fund biodiversity or landscape enhancement in the future. This includes the likes of Natural England and Forestry Commission as well as local and national funding bodies such as environmental trusts, Heritage Lottery Fund etc. Whilst funding for conservation management may be more restricted in the future, the hope is that being able to make reference to the direct benefits of targeted action on key species will be efficacious.
13. **Timescale** - It is proposed that Stage 1 tasks are delivered through 2014, taking advantage of the hiatus in the availability of agri-environment funding. Discussions with funders could begin in the latter part of 2014 as evidence is assembled, and with landowners thereafter, to reflect landowner interest and available funding.

14. Table 1 – Stage 1Tasks

Task	Status		Comments
	Complete	Ongoing	
Assemble a list of known priority species in the area, and associated records	✓		Only complete for records held by the Worcestershire Biological Records Centre
Identify species which are particularly important for the area and which are likely to benefit from landscape-scale work	✓		Initial list is being refined during March 2014.



Produce maps showing location of records for identified species		✓	
Consult with local recorders to establish whether additional records exist		✓	
Research and document habitat and habitat management requirements of identified species, including with reference to range		✓	
Produce a matrix to establish no.s of identified species which will benefit from defined management prescriptions			
Consider commissioning targeted data collection to supplement extant records			
Assess relevant species records against habitats in the project area and produce a spatially referenced model of management prescriptions			

**Recommendation**

**15. The Committee is recommended to:**

- a) Discuss the merits and any potential problems with the proposed project;**
- b) Identify additional project partners, especially landowners, who may be interested in taking part.**



# Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

11 April 2014

## 9. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND 2013/14 – UPDATE REPORT

### Background

1. The table below shows the Sustainable Development Fund's grants for the financial year 2013/14 . The budget is £35,000 and it is expected to be fully spent up. At the time of writing this report, not all the final figures were available so the allocated grant figures are shown and not the actual spend.

### Summary

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Grant Allocated</b>
Mary Constable	Loan for reprint of Malvern Hills AONB Literary Trail.	£890
Ledbury Food Group	Promotion of local foods in the area, including building a database of products and suppliers.	£4,928
Colwall Village Hall Committee	Provision of solar panels to MHAONB guidelines.	£2,000
Wildwood Coppice Crafts	Design and construction of a specialist kiln to process biochar (soil improver) thereby adding value to coppice work	£2,000
Robin Coates	Creation of raised beds at the Cube and instruction on how to grow vegetables.	£1,020
Brian Wilce.	Loan to help buy a bottling line to bottle cider and juice from his own orchards in the AONB.	£1,000
Virtual Experience Company	Web based pilot 3D map of the MHAONB with database of facilities/events etc.	£3500
Eastnor Estate	Restoration of the mill leat at Clencher's Mill.	£4,000

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Grant Allocated</b>
Hereford Amphibian and Reptile Team	Electronic tracking of adders on the Malverns to establish the best management of scrub on the hills for them.	£4800
Key IQ ltd	Final GPS framework that enables phone users to download information to their phones and trigger it at prescribed spots.	£3000
The Dooup Company	A local Ledbury Company produces a handheld machine to pick up dog poo in the garden. A grant has been given to help develop a prototype that can be used on long dog walks.	£4000
Malvern Hills Food Alliance	In conjunction with CPRE, a grant was offered to produce a web site that will connect local people with local food.	£600

**Recommendations**

**The Committee is requested to:**

- 1) Note and comment on the report.**