

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee



Agenda

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Friday, 23 April 2021, 10.00 am
Online**

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Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Friday, 23 April 2021, 10.00 am,

Members

Elected Members:

Mrs G Rees (Chairman)	Malvern Hills Conservators
Prof J W Raine (Vice Chairman)	Malvern Hills District Council
Bronwen Behan	Malvern Hills District Council
Mr S Bosley	Herefordshire Association of Local Councils
Mr J Fryman	Worcestershire Association of Local Councils
Mr A Johnson	Herefordshire Council
Mrs H l'Anson	Herefordshire Council
Dr K A Pollock	Worcestershire County Council
Mr P A Tuthill	Worcestershire County Council
Mr R Yeates	Forest of Dean District Council

**Non-Elected
members:**

Mr W Barnes	Forestry Commission
Prof R Bryant	Hereford & Worcester Earth Heritage Trust
Ms S Faulkner	NFU West Midlands
Mr I George	Historic England
Mr J Hervey-Bathurst	Country Land & Business Association
Mr F Hill	Campaign to Protect Rural England
Ms H McDowall	Natural England

Co-Opted Members:

Mr A Lee	Herefordshire Local Access Forum
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Agenda

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3	Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting	

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To obtain further information or a copy of this agenda contact Kate Griffiths on 01905 846630 or email: kgriffiths@worcestershire.gov.uk

All the above reports and supporting information can be accessed via the Council's website.

Date of Issue: Thursday, 1 April 2021

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	<p>If you have any other contributions that you would like to bring to the meeting, please contact Paul Esrich tel: 01905 845057.</p>	

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 23 APRIL 2021

ADVISING AND SUPPORTING LANDOWNERS AND MANAGERS IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Recommendation

- 1. The Committee is recommended to:**
 - a) Note the report;**
 - b) Raise and discuss any issues arising.**

Background

2. AONBs are closely involved in discussions and work around the development of the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme which will replace existing funding schemes which reward landowners and managers for environmental land management. ELM is due to be fully rolled out for farmers in England by the end of 2024. More information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-land-management-schemes-overview>

3. The National Association for AONBs has through input to the Glover Review and directly to Defra pitched for a strong role for AONB organisations in the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme.

Summary – ELM Advocacy Work

4. In October 2020 Defra made a sum of money (£7,202) available to every National Park Authority and every AONB Partnership in England to spend on 'ELM Advocacy Work' by the end of the financial year. These funds were to be used to:

- increase the understanding of the CS/ELM schemes to farmers and land managers,
- promote and develop networks
- work in collaboration with other National Landscape Organisations and the NAAONB.

5. It was also stipulated that feedback from farmers and land managers during this work should be reported to the NAAONB who were charged with compiling a final report to Defra.

6. In the Malvern Hills the AONB Unit decided to focus this spend on the northern part of the AONB. We made contact with 10 landowners in the area around the Suckley Hills, some of whom we had had no previous contact with. The advocacy funding was then used to engage the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) South West to liaise with these owners and to produce habitat-based land

management plans for each, with a focus on the potential of land to deliver Ecosystem Services¹ in the future. Specifically, FWAG:

- Obtained a data file for each land holding which allowed consideration of local targeting, key species and contextualisation of each farm holding in the wider landscape.
- Used field parcel information (available from the Rural Payments Agency and/or MHAONB habitat base map) to generate a single UKHab Map for holding (<https://ukhab.org/>).
- Held two virtual meetings with each landowner/manager, exploring findings, ground-truthing habitat data and discussing future direction of the farm business. Discussions around future funding streams was also encouraged.
- Produced a Natural Capital report for each holding, showing what habitats/ Natural Capital assets the current holding has, how they are managed (current condition where possible) and providing guidance on how the holding could be managed in the future in terms of natural capital/ecosystem services, to deliver public goods.

7. In addition, key species information from the Worcestershire Biological Records Centre and maps showing water flow pathways and areas at risk of soil erosion obtained from the Natural England Catchment Sensitive Farming project were included in the reports. This made the information provided to the landowners/managers comprehensive in scope, providing more information for future decision making.

8. The farms that were engaged in this work varied from 18ha to 330ha in size with farm types ranging from predominantly horticulture, to purely pasture based livestock and then predominantly arable units. The holdings covered a total of 790ha and are well connected to one another geographically.

9. Landowners and managers showed a great interest in this work and a desire to talk about current practices and future opportunities for their holdings in this transitional period between different types of agri-environment support. It was particularly pleasing to hear that many participants were keen to share their practices and experiences with others (some site visits with neighbours were suggested, when Covid allows) and it is hoped that this group of owners and managers may form a local network or cluster. Such groupings are particularly significant in helping to address issues like nature decline at the larger, landscape scale and the AONB Unit has undertaken to try and support this cluster moving forward, if that is the will of the owners and managers. Clusters like these could be very well placed to make use of the Local Nature Recovery level of funding which is expected to be available under ELM.

¹ Natural Capital is the stock of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things. The benefits people obtain from this Natural Capital stock such as food and timber, recreational opportunities, aesthetic values, health benefits, flood risk regulation, air and water quality regulation, and many more, are called ecosystem services.

Summary – Farming in Protected Landscapes - new Defra programme 2021-24

10. In the Agricultural Transition Plan published on 30 November 2020 (see extract at Appendix 1) Defra announced a new three year programme for National Parks and AONBs. The funding allocation is understood to be £22M in 2021-22, followed by £15M in 2022-23 and 2023-24 across the 44 protected landscapes.

11. In the information provided so far, the money is expected to meet protected landscape aims, 25 Year Environment Plan goals and recommendations from the Glover Review, and is also expected to support farmers. It is to be delivered across two elements:

(A) Farm level projects to diversify incomes, prepare for our Environmental Land Management offer and create more green jobs.

- Support for farmers for delivering environment/landscape outcomes. Examples might include peat restoration, planting woodland, hay meadow restoration, creation of heathland and scrub, moorland management, enhancement of wetlands, and dry-stone wall repairs
- Support to farmers on areas such as carbon capture, business planning, and skills development including apprenticeships

(B) Wider infrastructure investment and projects supporting farmers and rural economies

- Infrastructure, such as better access, clearer and simpler signage, dedicated cycling/electric bike access – to attract more diverse groups of visitors (to farm businesses, camping barns, etc.) as well as creating jobs (e.g. expansion of landscape rangers supporting farmers and visitors)
- Strengthened public engagement with landscapes to attract more, and more diverse, visitors, improving mental health outcomes and better disabled access; walking routes to better connect landscapes.

12. We had no knowledge of this programme before it was published in the Agriculture Transition Plan and details are still not clear. Staff working in the AONB network and for the National Association for AONBs are still in discussions with Defra about this work. All AONB teams are in agreement that additional staff capacity will be needed to implement the programme, and it appears clear that this will be legitimate spend from within the programme budget.

13. Important factors/decisions:

- Budget allocation to Malvern Hills AONB (will be decided by Defra).
- Budget split between elements A and B of the programme (may be decided by Defra or for us to decide?).
- Budget profile across the three years – any frontloading with higher budget in year 1 is likely to create real challenges.
- Delivery methods:

14. For element A, it appears that a new AONB Partnership grant scheme for farmers is likely to be the backbone of this. The procedures of the former Sustainable Development Fund could form a good basis for this. Decisions would be needed on:

- Eligibility
- Priorities and guidance
- Grant duration and conditions
- Timing of application cycles/windows
- Decision making on grant awards
- Dovetailing with agri-environment schemes
- Monitoring

15. The best outcomes for AONB objectives are likely to be met by including within the programme staff capacity for advice to guide potential grant applicants, i.e. over and above administration of processes.

16. Establishment of an effective grant programme would need input from relevant partners, and the AONB Partnership is well placed to draw on this.

17. For the second heading of ‘support to farmers’ it is likely that training programmes of some sort will be appropriate. Again these will probably be best developed in conjunction with partners.

18. Element B – there could be more different choices about how to deliver this. Infrastructure could include some larger strategic projects, e.g. off-road cycle routes, or capital works to address localised car parking and visitor pressure points.

19. Attracting more diverse groups of visitors is mentioned twice in Defra’s guidance, and Rangers are mentioned. The need for on the ground visitor management may be increasing in the AONB, especially following the last 12 months during Covid, and there may be some potential to establish a new Ranger type post/service (outwith those that exist on Malvern Hills Trust land) to support activities such :

- Improved visitor management at locations in private ownership which have no real provision for visitor management. This would include liaison with landowners and community representatives, engaging with visitors to influence behaviour and address issues at peak times, as well as identifying longer term strategic improvements such as improvements to access infrastructure, information and interpretation.
- Outreach work with under-represented sections of the population, and leading or supporting new programmes of visits and activities with these groups.
- Establishing a programme of practical AONB volunteering tasks to undertake tasks not being done in other ways, and to provide new opportunities for active involvement by the public.
- All of these would be carried out in close collaboration with team members working on tourism, promotion, conservation and work with farmers, and of course with other partner organisations.

20. This kind of service would be a significant addition to the capacity of the team, and could be quite transformative for our overall delivery, especially in very visible activities. Such a service would of course be best as a long-term commitment and this funding is only a 3 year package. The exit/continuation options and implications of having to wind up the service after three years would need to be considered.

Supporting Documents

Appendix 1 – extract from the Agricultural Transition Plan published on 30 November 2020 – See following document.

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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B.6 Farming in Protected Landscapes

We want: To support farmers and other land managers in Protected Landscapes, to help them diversify their income streams and lay the groundwork for our Environmental Land Management offer.

We will: Provide support to farmers, via National Park Authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty bodies, to help grow businesses, create green jobs, enhance biodiversity and invest in infrastructure to attract more diverse visitors to support local economies.

Farmers in Protected Landscapes operate in challenging agricultural conditions and are often very reliant on Direct Payments. At the same time, they provide huge environmental, social and cultural benefits.

In addition to the other policies laid out here, we are proposing a specific and time limited package to help farmers adapt during the transition. This programme will support farmers and land managers so they can work with Protected Landscapes to deliver environmental outcomes, lay the groundwork for our Environmental Land Management offer, and contribute towards the delivery of recommendations in the Glover Review of National Landscapes.

Scheme description

The scheme will deliver funding through the Protected Landscapes⁶ bodies to support farmers, particularly upland farmers (75% of whom live and work in Protected Landscapes) to make improvements to the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access on their land.

Eligibility

Farmers and other land managers in Protected Landscapes will have the opportunity to work with their National Park or Area of Outstanding National Beauty. More information will be provided on this scheme in early 2021.

⁶ The 44 Protected Landscapes include 10 National Parks and 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Payments

The scheme will use existing delivery mechanisms through Areas of Outstanding National Beauty and National Park Authorities, who have existing infrastructure and relationships across Protected Landscapes.

The spend each year would support delivery against two complementary areas: (A) farm level projects and (B) wider infrastructure and projects on farmland.

Farmers and other land managers will benefit from:

(A) Farm level projects to diversify incomes, prepare for our Environmental Land Management offer and create more green jobs.

- Support for farmers for delivering environment/landscape outcomes. Examples might include peat restoration, planting woodland, hay meadow restoration, creation of heathland and scrub, moorland management, enhancement of wetlands, and dry-stone wall repairs
- Support to farmers on areas such as carbon capture, business planning, and skills development including apprenticeships

(B) Wider infrastructure investment and projects supporting farmers and rural economies

- Infrastructure, such as better access, clearer and simpler signage, dedicated cycling/electric bike access – to attract more diverse groups of visitors (to farm businesses, camping barns, etc.) as well as creating jobs (e.g. expansion of landscape rangers supporting farmers and visitors)
- Strengthened public engagement with landscapes to attract more, and more diverse, visitors, improving mental health outcomes and better disabled access; walking routes to better connect landscapes.

Timings

We will be providing more information about the scheme in early 2021.

To keep up to date on farming announcements, sign up to [Defra email alerts](#)

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

23 APRIL 2021

NATIONAL ARTS STRATEGY

Recommendation

- 1. The Committee is recommended to:**
 - a) Adopt the Arts in the Landscape Strategy and support participation in coordinated national and local action resulting from the Strategy,**
 - b) Support the principle of using arts to help join up climate change mitigation and adaptation and nature recovery work; and**
 - c) Contact David Armitage if members have artistic ideas, or indeed experience of running successful ‘arts’ projects.**

Background

2. What follows is a model agreement on a National Arts Strategy, laid out by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB). All AONBs will be asked to consider agreeing to it.
3. With support from the AONB network, the NAAONB has commissioned and adopted the ‘Arts in the Landscape Strategy: connecting people to nature through art and culture’. Each AONB is invited to adopt the Strategy as an indication of the joint commitment to deepen and diversify how we engage people in our protected areas through the arts. While the potential for this activity is extensive, particular note should be made of the opportunity to connect people to nature through art, such as enhancing the delivery and impact of Nature Recovery activity. This joint commitment will be powerful and effective at local, regional and national level, taking us further than we could get individually.

Summary

1. A national strategy has been created by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) to galvanise action that enables people to experience a deeper connection to the natural beauty of the landscape through the arts.
2. The Art in The Landscape Strategy was formally adopted at the NAAONB Annual General Meeting in November 2020 and all AONBs are invited to adopt the Strategy and participate in coordinated national and local action resulting from it. The Strategy helps the AONB Network achieve its Colchester Declaration aims¹, and those of the National Landscapes Review around:

¹ <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/projects/colchester-declaration>

- Engaging with a wider and more diverse audience
- Helping people to create deeper connections to nature, place and landscape
- Inspiring pro-environmental behaviour to tackle the conjoined ecological and climate emergency

3. The Art in the Landscape Strategy helps focus future delivery of art activity, collectively within the AONB family as well as locally. It also shows Arts Council England and other funders that the NAAONB and the AONB Network are committing to broaden and deepen our work with arts and culture in order to better connect people to nature.

Relevance to the Malvern Hills AONB

4. Page 85 of our current Management Plan hopes that people ‘are connected intellectually, emotionally and/or spiritually with the area’, and that ‘the AONBs heritage inspires passion, intrigue and fascination’. The ‘arts’ can turn hope to action.

5. We have done a few arts projects in the past: poetry writing days in the AONB with the Ledbury Poetry Festival and a play about Malvern’s Heritage on the Route to the Hills Project. But like most marketing, it needs a consistent effort to produce results: this hasn’t happened: this Strategy would help.

Art in the Landscape Strategy Development

6. The ‘National Moment’ in 2019, supported by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage with [‘Fugitives’](#), presented the NAAONB with a high-profile stage to make an ambitious [‘Art in the Landscape Statement of Intent’](#) - a commitment to engaging people with nature through the arts.

7. In this statement, Howard Davies (Chief Exec, NAAONB) states, “The creative exploration of place, through music, painting, poetry, and dance opens up the experience of landscape beyond the world of science and policy and helps us better understand our place in the world. With better understanding comes better stewardship; the basis of a more sustainable future.”

8. On the back of the statement of intent, NAAONB resourced the development of the strategy with grant support from Arts Council England (ACE) and contributions from the AONB network. A national steering group was set up and Activate Performing Arts were commissioned to:

- Consult with AONB teams with different levels of experience in delivering arts and culture projects, importantly hearing from those who have not yet delivered major projects.
- Research good practice from the three land guardians: National Trust, Forestry England and Canal & Rivers Trust who have Memorandums of Understanding with Arts Council England.
- Consult with senior officers from Arts Council England and other agencies.
- Deliver a training programme for the AONB members to offer insight into working with the arts and develop confidence in the teams.

- Produce the Arts in the Landscape Strategy to provide direction for the NAAONB and AONB Network

9. A summary of the Aims and Recommendations of the Strategy are detailed below, the full Strategy can be found [on the NAAONB website](#).

Art in the Landscape Strategy: Vision and Aims

10. People experience a deeper connection to the natural beauty of the landscape through the arts.

1. **To connect** people to nature and the natural beauty of the AONBs – increasing creativity, wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour.
2. **To challenge** perceptions of access to the landscape in order to diversify engagement.
3. **To broker** new trusted relationships with the arts and cultural sector to co- create new programmes.
4. **To celebrate** the existing creativity in the AONB teams and the local community.
5. **To work with** arts and culture to understand and directly address the climate emergency and nature recovery.
6. **To welcome** provocations and questions in exploring ways that arts can change perceptions.
7. **To inspire** ambition by sharing exemplary projects of all scales.
8. **To capture** the public's imagination through engaging them in creative responses to the landscape.
9. **To raise** the profile of the landscape and the AONBs and the purpose of the AONB teams.
10. To lever in resources and relationships at all levels for an ambitious programme.

Art in the Landscape Strategy: Summary of Recommendations

1. Adopt the National Arts Strategy

The process of developing the Strategy was grounded in the consultation across the network. A nationally and locally endorsed strategy will have strong currency in discussions with external agencies, both national agencies such as government and funders and locally with partners, arts and cultural organisations.

Recommendations:

- NAAONB adopt and endorse the Strategy and report at the Annual Chairs meeting;
- following on from this each AONB circulates the Strategy to all AONB's staff and members of AONB partnership boards;
- time is dedicated at full team meetings of each AONB and at partnership board for presentation and discussion of the Strategy;

- the Strategy is adopted by each AONB partnership board who agree an in principal commitment to invest in the proposed National resource;
- a five-year national action plan should then be drawn up (relating to Recommendation 8), endorsed by the National Steering Group and adopted by the NAAONB;
- recognising the unique sense of place each AONB has, each creates a local action plan of how the strategy can be implemented in their area within their Management plan and relating to the national plan.

2. Deliver a National Creative Projects Programme

Research responses also strongly advocated for national creative projects to be clustered around specific themes, e.g., dark skies, coasts, ceremonial landscapes and hill forts. Crucially the national creative projects need a simple artistic provocation at the centre. Further ideas will be created by inviting experienced artists from diverse backgrounds into the AONBs and allowing their thinking to imagine new possibilities

Recommendation:

- That national creative projects, of different forms, are adopted as a powerful activity in line with the aims for the AONBs. They can offer the opportunity:
 - for all AONBs to be involved;
 - to be planned to share good practice and encourage peer to peer support;
 - to be scalable so can be variation of delivery dependent upon local partners and resource – it is important to note that small budgets can be used resourcefully with artists;
 - to create stories, images, film that can be used for gaining profile and inspiration for future projects;
 - to hold over a specified period, such as Spring, or at the same time across the country events such as building on the existing national Landscapes for Life week in late September each year;
 - for collaboration with other national organisations, for example Culture Declares Emergency.

3. Widen the welcome

The NAAONB and many individual AONBs want to take positive action to set about broadening the reach of the work, which will result in far more people feeling connected to nature and wanting to be proactive in their tendency to nature conservation. Arts and culture are an excellent way to do this.

Recommendations:

- The AONBs work through arts and culture programmes to establish meaningful links, connections and visits with communities with higher levels of people from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.
- A target for new arts and culture projects that at least 50% of the commissioned lead artists are from D/deaf and disabled, BAMER and lower socio-economic backgrounds. Equally, this should also be reflected in the teams brought in to work on the project and those participating in the work.

- The Steering Group and National lead will support the identifying of a cohort of interested artists that AONBs could then work with on creative projects.

4. Develop the Governance

There is a relatively low level of membership by representatives from cultural organisations on AONB Management or Stakeholder groups and in partnership working.

Recommendations:

- that the positive recruitment of at least one person from the culture sector to become a member of these Governance groups with a specific brief to help both the committee and staff team to develop their engagement with the arts and to adopt the Strategy.
- that relationships with artists, arts and cultural organisations that either are located in or near the AONBs are developed.

5. Advocate continually

Arts and culture should be integrated in delivering conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the same way that 'outreach' or 'education' currently are.

Recommendations:

- the NAAONB, the Steering Group and individual AONBs continue to advocate for the work through an existing and ongoing programme of conferences, regular information briefings and presentations and through the dissemination of case studies, evaluation and research findings and any generated external coverage into the enhanced arts programme.
- a dedicated area of the NAAONB's website to be created to showcase the arts programme and house the links to individual projects across the country.

6. Sustain and expand the National Arts and Culture Steering Group

This current research programme has been guided by a steering group, comprised of representatives from the NAAONB and individual AONBs, bringing a range of viewpoints, regional perspectives and represents differing levels of existing engagement across the membership.

Recommendation:

The Steering Group is extended to become an ongoing steering group and that its membership is widened either by co-option or invitation to include places for representatives from artists, arts and culture organisations and that diversity is considered and reimbursement for time is offered.

7. Develop an understanding between NAAONB, AONBs and Arts Council England

This funded research process has seen a continuing and developing dialogue at strategic level between NAAONB, AONBs and ACE.

Recommendations:

- the NAAONB continue these discussions with ACE and develop an agreement based around their shared priorities. This agreement should look to the coming five years, as a trial period for joint working to increase arts and culture engagement within AONBs, with artists and organisations for people based both within and without them. The agreement should be monitored annually by senior ACE officers and the NAAONB and the Steering Group.
- that as ACE refreshes its Rural Stakeholders group, it invites a representative from the Steering group to the bi-annual meeting considering issues relating to arts and culture and rural communities and sends officer/s to the NAAONB annual conference to understand the developing AONB context.

8. Create a Core National Resource

Research and consultation identified the benefit and catalysing impact of a core national resource would have - encouraging, inspiring, supporting and advocating for arts and culture within the sector and beyond.

Recommendation

Create a new national role (with some administrative support) based within the NAAONB to bring expertise and additional capacity to deliver the strategy's aim and vision. This should be resourced for a medium-term period of five years, with a delivery budget.

9. Create a Training and Professional Development Programme

AONBs and their staff have an identified need for specific training and capacity building and continuing professional development programmes in working with the arts.

Recommendations:

- Training & capacity building is developed in a number of ways and managed by the national Arts and Culture Development Manager:
 - Inspirational – making detailed case studies of projects available, commissioning online video interviews with AONB officers and artists on their work together and live presentations at future national conferences.
 - Practical – building on from the training delivered in this programme developing access to a set of bespoke resources e.g. project toolkit including planning guidance, suggested processes, timelines, budgeting advice, budget template, marketing and audience development; evaluation frameworks.
 - Mutual Learning and Support – cluster support and networking groups could emerge either from AONBs Taking The Lead programme, the Communications Group or areas of interest such as Dark Skies. These groups would develop a term of reference for a specific period to offer mutual support, explore themes together, develop potential group collaboration and share artist information.

NB: the full Strategy can be found [on the NAAONB website](#).

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
23 APRIL 2021**AONB BUDGET AND WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

Recommendation**1. The Committee is recommended to:**

- a) Note the budget for 2021/22; and**
- b) Comment on the overall direction and work priorities for the year ahead.**

Summary

2. A summary of the draft core budget for the year is provided in Appendix 1. Budget figures from previous years are provided in brackets for comparison. It should be noted that detailed financial planning for next year has been hampered by workloads, Covid and delayed announcements from Defra. Therefore, what follows should be taken as draft. The main points to note are as follows.

Budget

3. The total budget for 2021/22 is unchanged from 2020/21 at £193,387. This reflects an announcement from Defra of a flat cash settlement to AONB Partnerships from Central Government for the next financial year. No indication has yet been provided about future funding contributions.

4. Of the total, £181,197 (£181,197) can be identified as 'core' funding with £12,190 (£12,190) allocated to the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). £10,000 (£10,000) has been set aside for biodiversity related work, reflecting a request which is expected to be made by Defra in its offer letter (not yet received).

5. Central government is providing all of the funding for the SDF and biodiversity work and a maximum of 75% of the total core budget, a combined total of £151,313 (£151,313). Local authorities in the area are providing £42,074 of match funding to core costs in the following proportions:

Herefordshire Council - £16,334
Worcestershire County Council - £13,268
Malvern Hills District Council - £11,000
Forest of Dean District Council - £872
Gloucestershire County Council - £600

Voluntary contributions

6. At its meeting on 26/04/13, JAC members agreed that there was merit in inviting Parish and Town Councils to make voluntary contributions to the work of the AONB Partnership. An initial request was made to a small number of Councils and, following some success, additional Councils were contacted. Appendix 2 summarises contributions received since 2016/17. Whilst some individual contributions may be small they can add up to very decent totals which are useful when added to the overall budget for delivering the Partnership's work programme. Financial contributions can be seen as a tangible expression of how local councils value the work of the AONB Partnership.

Staff

7. Due to difficulties with recruiting and training a new member of staff in the current climate, plus uncertainties over future core resourcing it is unlikely that a replacement Support Officer will not be appointed. Instead, existing Asst Manager capacity will be increased in the short term, alongside the continuation of an arrangement to buy-in support services from within Worcestershire County Council. It is expected that there will be a freeze or only very minor increase in salaries in 2021/22.

Work priorities

8. The Unit's work programme for 2021/22 will be centred around the implementation of the AONB Management Plan but is also expected to be driven, significantly, by more recent drivers and initiatives. Key priorities for the year are expected to include:

- Develop, consult on and complete a Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB and surrounds.
- Manage the Farming in Protected Landscapes project.
- Support and advise landowners and managers.
- Explore a large funding bid for an arts-based project to help people make an emotional connection with nature.
- Develop a new website and overhaul communications.
- Continue to provide a planning comments service.
- Support c.15 biodiversity and SDF-type projects in the AONB.

Project funding

9. External funding linked to the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and a possible extension to the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund are also expected to be forthcoming.

County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Specific Contact Points for this report

Paul Esrich, AONB Partnership Manager

Tel: 01905 845057

Element	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Staff (costs inc. salary, NI, super, training, travel, NI, backfunding pensions etc)¹								
AONB Manager	£58,941	£58,941	£57,399	£52,160	£52,410	£52,405	£51,910	£50,400
AONB Assistant Manager	£54,000 ²	£44,518	£43,500	£39,510	£39,600	£39,500	£39,300	£38,220
AONB Support Officer	£0 ³	£18,949	£18,202	£15,650	£15,770	£15,770	£15,570	£15,160
Strategy Officer/Planning Advice	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	£7,000	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000
Project Officer/support costs bought in	£1,000							£3,669
Sub total	£121,941	£130,408	£127,101	£115,320	£114,780	£115,675	£114,780	£115,449
Accommodation/ office equipment	£9,072	£9,072	£9,072	£9,072	£8,742	£8,742	£8,742	£8,242
Partnership budget for PR, events etc.								
NAAONB membership	£3,000	£3,000	£2,575	£2,575	£2,400	£2,400		
Annual review	£400	£400	£358	£400	£400	£400		
Small grants scheme for landscape and biodiversity improvements	£10,000	£10,000	£4,000	£3,000	£3,600	£3,600		
Landscape scale project development	£4,580	£4,580	£4,580	£3,000	£3,500	£3,500		
External advice	£7,967	£3,500	£3,500	£1,500				
State of AONB report				£5,000				
Management Plan review				£9,000				
Large projects	£8,000	£10,000	£5,000	£5,000	£6,980	£4,380		
Communications	£7,000	£5,000	£3,000	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000		
Sub total	£40,947	£32,480	£23,013	£31,475	£24,880	£22,280	£22,280	£22,111
Partnership running costs (Council support, IT,	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237

¹ Assumes no/negligible pay increase for staff.

² Job share 6 days a week

³ Not expecting to recruit to the vacant Support Officer post.

personnel, finance etc.)								
Sustainable Development Fund	£12,190	£12,190	£22,875	£22,872	£25,991	£25,502	£24,000	£24,000
Total Budget	£193,387	£193,387	£191,298	£187,976	£183,875	£181,436	£179,039	£179,039

Appendix 2 – Voluntary contributions from Parish/Town Councils

Organisation	Contribution				
	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Colwall PC	£1,500	£1,500	£750	£750	£750
Cradley PC		£100	£100	£100	£100
Ledbury TC		£500	£500		
Malvern Wells PC	£1,000	£760	£1,600	£1,600	£1,600
Little Malvern & Welland PC	£300	£300	£250	£250	£250
West Malvern PC	£300	£300	£300	£300	£300
Wellington Heath PC	£100	£100			
Berrow PC			£50		
Total	£3,200	£3,560	£3,550	£3,000	£3,000

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

23 April 2021

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND 2020/21 – FINAL REPORT

Background

1. The table below shows the Sustainable Development Fund's grant expenditure for the financial year 2020/21. The budget was £12,190 and expenditure £11,207. The c.£1,000 underspend was re-allocated to Landscape Grants. With Covid restrictions, this year, for the first time ever, projects have been thin on the ground, and the budget was underspent.

Summary

SDF Final Account		
	Budget	£12,190.00
No	Project Title	Grant
195	Barton Ct History Book	£1,000.00
209	Barton Ct Dovecote Repairs	£900.00
233	Colwall PC Footpaths Map & App	£1,500.00
235	Geosite Maintenance vols	£1,500.00
237	GPS Cattle Collars	£1,000.00
238	Electric Car for car club	£1,500.00
239	Malvern Lost Fritillary Project	£500
240	Meat Marketing	£160.00
241	Metal detectorist display	£300.00
242	Barton Ct Electric Bike Charging Point	£300.00
243	Soil testing kit	£203.60
245	Arts Project Reaction Theatre	£1,000.00
246	Orchard Advice (4 orchards)	£325.00
	Total Grant	£10,188.60
	Admin @ 10% of total	£1,018.86
	Total Grant to be reclaimed from DEFRA	£11,207.46

2. Recommendation

The Committee is requested to:

- a) Note and comment on the report.
- b) Bring project ideas to the AONB unit for 2021/22.

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Email: worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk

Specific Contact Points for this report

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MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
23 APRIL 2021**INFORMATION ITEMS**

**Management Plan ref.
(abridged)**

LP3 Promote positive change to landowners, managers, developers etc.

BP2 Conserve, enhance and expand key habitats and populations of key species in line with local biodiversity priorities

BP4 Improve knowledge and understanding of the AONB's biodiversity

FP6 – Encourage the take-up of options and management practices that benefit the natural and cultural capital of the AONB.

ProjectLand management advice

The Unit commissioned call-off advice from a land management advisor towards the end of 2019/20 and again in 2020/21. This has helped us to step-up our conservation advisory work with owners and farmers with 6 advisory visits taking place in 2020/21. 2 owners also benefitted from meadow restoration plans produced by the Herefordshire Meadows Group. 1 owner received support with preparing and submitting a Woodland Management Plan.

Biodiversity grants

8 biodiversity grants were provided to support work as diverse as orchard creation at Barton Court, planting a new woodland in Malvern Wells, hedge laying in Suckley and fencing a 'wet' field in Colwall.

The volunteers of Colwall Orchard Group received a grant to restore traditional orchards in the parish, and so planted 73 trees in 10 orchards.

Nature Recovery Planning

The data assessment and mapping phase of a Nature Recovery Plan is almost complete. Baseline and opportunity maps have been created for ecological opportunities and for a range of Ecosystem Services in the area. We have attempted to integrate landscape and the historic environment into this work too. Partners from a number of bodies have made a contribution to this work.

Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund

An event on shooting and conservation in woodlands was held on-line in December 2020. Since then, events have been on hold due to COVID 19, and we are applying for an extension to the grant period, to make up for lost time.

FP7: Promote local and seasonal produce and support the development of local services and markets.

BDP2 The distinctive character and natural beauty of the AONB will be fully reflected in planning policy and guidance and in decision-making.

TP2: Provide a quality public realm with good access and accessibility to facilities and features that attract tourists.

TRP6: Ensure that new developments on the periphery of the AONB do not give rise to significant traffic increases and associated effects on tranquillity and enjoyment.

RP4 Developments that are likely to lead to an increase in negative recreational effects in an area should contribute to the costs

Countryside Stewardship

2 landowners covering almost 300 acres of ground have been supported in preparing mid-tier Countryside Stewardship applications.

Marketing Meat from the Hills

With the quality of meat from livestock reared on the Hills being so high, and increasing worries about the source of food, the AONB Unit has teamed up with graziers and a local butcher to look into marketing the meat and making the link between food and wildlife conservation. The meat was advertised and sold over the Christmas period.

Revised guidance documents

It is now 10 years since the AONB Partnership produced 'Guidance on Keeping Horses in the landscape'. This document has been revisited, revised and updated. We aim to re-publish the document in the Spring.

Colwall Footpaths

Exploring what's on your doorstep is the 'new local tourism' and seemingly, the great balm for mind and body. Working with Colwall Parish Council, the AONB Unit is helping to reprint their popular footpaths map and create a couple of phone 'apps' as a guide to the best walks. The maps are now printed; the apps are to come.

Appeal, Ledbury Viaduct

The appeal made by Bloor Homes against the refusal of planning permission on land north of the viaduct in Ledbury has been allowed by the Secretary of State. It was concluded that the proposed development would not give rise to any significant adverse effects on the quality of peoples' recreational experiences, or damage to/erosion and loss of characteristic and valuable landscape elements and features along narrow lanes.

Recreational impacts study

A study to better understand visitor origins and recreational impacts on the Malvern Hills SSSI is underway. It is hoped that the conclusions will provide part of the evidence base for the South Worcestershire Development Plan review.

**of mitigating and
managing these effects**

**IP1 Raise awareness of
being in the Malvern
Hills AONB and the
significance of the
designation**

On-line arts project

Supported by a small grant from the Sustainable Development Fund, local theatre company, Re-Action theatre, have been working throughout lockdown to produce an on-line film about living in the AONB. Able and less able participants have been supported to get outside and experience the area and to then record their thoughts and feelings about nature and the landscape. The short film will be available to view on the MHAONB website from mid-April.

Recommendation

Members of the JAC are requested to note this information report and contact the AONB Unit if they wish to be involved in any consultations or to receive further information on any of these agenda items.

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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