



Agenda

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Friday, 20 November 2015, 10.00 am
Council Chamber, Malvern**

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Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Friday, 20 November 2015, 10.00 am,

Members

Elected Members:

Prof J W Raine (Chairman)	Malvern Hills District Council
Mr S Bosley	Herefordshire Association of Local Councils
Mr J Fryman	Worcestershire Association of Local Councils
Ms E Holton	Herefordshire Council
Mr A Johnson	Herefordshire County Council
Mrs C O'Donnell	Malvern Hills District Council
Dr K A Pollock	Worcestershire County Council
Mrs G Rees	Malvern Hills Conservators
Mr P A Tuthill	Worcestershire County Council
Mr C Williams	Forest of Dean District Council

**Non-Elected
members:**

Mike Ashton	Visit Herefordshire/Destination Worcestershire
Wayne Barnes	Forestry Commission
Prof R Bryant	Hereford & Worcester Earth Heritage Trust
Ms S Faulkner	NFU West Midlands
Mr I George	Historic England
Ms D Griffiths	Natural England
Mr J Hervey-Bathurst	County Land & Business Association
Dr Richard Williams	Campaign to Protect Rural England

Co-Opted Members:

Mr A Lee	Herefordshire Local Access Forum
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Agenda

Item No	Subject	Page No
1	Apologies and Substitutes	
2	Declaration of Interests	
3	To elect a Chairman	

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

Date of Issue: Friday, 6 November 2015

Item No	Subject	Page No
4	To appoint a Vice-Chairman	
5	Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting	
6	Woodland Management in the Malvern Hills AONB To receive a presentation from Wayne Barnes, Woodland Officer, Forestry Commission.	
7	The future of the Castlemorton Commons To receive a report from David Armitage, AONB Partnership Assistant Manager.	1 - 2
8	The Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project - one year in To receive a report from Karen Humphries, Project Officer for The Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project.	3 - 6
9	Sustainable Development Fund To receive a report from David Armitage, AONB Partnership Assistant Manager.	7 - 8
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11	Verbal Reports from Partners	
12	Dates of Future Meetings 29 April 2016 18 November 2016 To be held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Malvern	

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 20 NOVEMBER 2015

THE FUTURE OF THE CASTLEMORTON COMMONS

Background

1. This project is derived from the following policies in the Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19:
 - a) LP2 – Restore distinctive landscapes that have been significantly degraded.
 - b) LP3 – Identify and promote opportunities for positive landscape change to landowner.
 - c) BP2 – Restore the condition of degraded habitats in line with local and national biodiversity priorities.
 - d) HP1 – Conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment of the AONB in accordance with key documents.

2. The common land within the parishes of Castlemorton and Birtsmorton form a very distinctive landscape. Much of the land is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The landscape has been created by hundreds of years of grazing by livestock belonging to individuals with common rights. Though individuals have the right to graze, they don't own these commons. Malvern Hills Conservators own Castlemorton Common, and Birtsmorton Court owns Coombegreen Common in Birtsmorton. Livestock can range freely between these two commons, and they are both one common land unit.

3. One common land unit, two commons, two owners, one problem; and that is the decline in grazing. With its partnership approach to landscape management, the AONB Unit has been involved in trying to find solutions to this common problem. The diagnosis is the lack of grazing and the symptom is the scrubbing up of the landscape which changes its savannah look, impedes public access and degrades the SSSI.

4. The AONB Unit has previously helped to provide infrastructure to manage the commons on the hills through the Malvern's Heritage Project, funded partly by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Almost 10 years ago now, this project installed cattlegrids and electric gates to on the hillside commons from British Camp to Chase End Hill. It also paved the way for the current Higher Level Stewardship programme for the hillside and Castlemorton Commons. Originally the project envisaged the installation of cattlegrids on Castlemorton Commons; this dropped out of the project for financial and political reasons.

5. But the problem still remains and has increased by degree; there are now even fewer graziers and livestock, barring Malvern Hills Conservators who have taken up some of the unused rights and now graze through an agent. Those who currently graze, and those who don't but might, both say that containing the livestock within the common is the single most important discouragement they face.

6. The Malvern Hills AONB Unit is now under contract to the Malvern Hills Conservators to produce a report (working with Footprint Ecology) on the future of the Castlemorton Commons. Because of the link through to Coombegreen Common, the Unit has also commissioned the development of a management plan specifically for that common. The job of the Unit, in its partnership role, will be to ensure that these two plans mesh together. Both reports should be complete by the end of January 2016. Then, following consideration by those with jurisdiction over the land, it is hoped that implementation will commence later in 2016.

7. In order to implement any recommendations from these plans, it will mean creating a further partnership - in particular with Worcestershire County Council's Highways, should cattlegrids across the highways, or invisible fencing, be a solution to containing livestock. At the time of writing, catching the attention of Highways and their consultant designers CH2M, is proving difficult.

8. The new Countryside Stewardship Scheme, as a provider of income and capital for works on the commons, may feature as a recommendation of the reports.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

9. Any Worcestershire County Council involvement in a future management project on the Castlemorton Commons is expected to be on a costed basis.

Recommendation

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

- a) **Note the partnership approach to landscape management across multiple ownerships;**
- b) **Consider writing a letter of support for the principles of the project, to the Malvern Hills Conservators; and**
- c) **Give its support to the continued attempts to engage with Worcestershire County Council's Highways department and their design consultants.**

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 20 NOVEMBER 2015

THE THREE COUNTIES TRADITIONAL ORCHARD PROJECT – ONE YEAR IN.

Background

1. This project is derived from the following policies in the Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19:
 - a) LP2 – Restore distinctive landscapes that have been significantly degraded.
 - b) LP3 – Identify and promote opportunities for positive landscape change to landowners.
 - c) BP2 – Restore the condition of degraded habitats in line with local and national biodiversity priorities.
 - d) BP3 – Enhance the wildlife value of the countryside and achieve greater buffering and connectivity between key habitats
 - e) HP1 – Conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment of the AONB in accordance with key documents.

2. In 2011 groups from a wide range of organisations came together to begin the process of shaping a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a project which would help address the rapid decline of traditional orchards across Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Although traditional orchards are now recognised as habitats of national importance they usually have no formal protection and a great number are in poor condition¹. Following a successful development year a grant of £332,000 was awarded by HLF in November 2014 for a three year project. The Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project (TCTOP) is based on the Colwall Orchard Group's model of training local people to manage traditional orchards in their area on behalf of orchard owners. In Colwall this has resulted in skills being developed and retained locally and in greater recognition within the community of the value of traditional orchards, for both wildlife and people.

Delivering the project

3. The AONB Unit is the project manager for TCTOP and is working with traditional orchard experts from three county based 'hub' groups – The Gloucestershire Orchard Trust, Colwall Orchard Group and Worcestershire County Council Countryside Services (in partnership with the Vale Landscape Heritage Trust and Worcester City Orchard Workers). The project is operational in eight key orchard areas across the three counties, delivering training and mentoring. One of these areas (Alfrick) is within the AONB and there are also plans to develop a demonstration orchard at the Three Counties Showground, to compliment other orchard based activities there.

¹ The People's Trust for Endangered Species estimate that 90% of traditional orchards in the UK have been lost since 1950 and of those which remain 46% are in poor condition. (survey info 2015)

4. Each project orchard is surveyed for wildlife, fruit varieties and historical / landscape value in order to inform the development of a bespoke management plan. Information and data collected in this way is also shared with relevant records offices and with local organisations such as the County Wildlife Trusts, as well as with National bodies, such as the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and Brogdale (The National Fruit Collection).

5. In addition to practical restoration work the project provides opportunities for people to get involved with TCTOP through history and heritage projects, wildlife surveying and events and celebrations.

6. TCTOP is working with County archaeologists/ historians to deliver training in orchard history and heritage to local orchard groups and is part of a pioneering national movement to recognise the importance of orchards in landscape and social history.

7. TCTOP is on course to meet all the outputs in the project action plan for year one and is expected to exceed some targets by project close in 2017.

To date:²

- 19 orchards have 'signed up' to become project orchards
- 8 management plans have been completed
- 6 variety plans have been produced
- 8 wildlife surveys have been completed
- 12 introductory / work days have been held in project orchards
- 9 training days have been held – first aid, mistletoe, fruit I.D, wildlife surveying
- 118 people have either volunteered or attended training sessions
- 202 people have 'signed up' to receive orchard info from TCTOP

8. The Project Officer and the skills 'hubs' have also hosted a range of other events, including a 100 varieties walk at Tenbury and an orchard safari, taking in orchards within the AONB and beyond. The project has also been promoted at local fetes, fairs and events across the Three Counties area.

Evaluation

9. The project is being evaluated on a rolling basis and although at an early stage, evidence shows that those taking part have enjoyed the experience and have improved their knowledge and skills. 118 people have volunteered or taken part in training to date and feedback about the Hub mentors and trainers has been excellent. The range of people taking part is good – volunteers have been from 17 years to 80+ - although the majority of people taking part are 50+ and are often the active retired. There is an equal split between women and men. Most of the key project areas now have a small group of people who are committed to helping with orchard restoration in their locality.

² Figures shown are from January 2015- October 2015

Added value

10. There have been a significant number of unintended outcomes, bringing extra value to the project. TCTOP's influence is growing and there have been increased opportunities for networking and for sharing best practice with a wide range of organisations both within and beyond the AONB. TCTOP has been in discussion with several other regional and national orchard organisations on issues such as gleaning, community orchards and volunteering. We are currently developing traditional orchard training courses for less-able students (the ABC course) as well as working with Garden Organic (Henry Doubleday) to trial and deliver a Master Orchardist course which may become a national standard.

11. The project successfully applied for an Innovation grant of £3,500 from Natural England to allow the budding and grafting of 300 trees from 15 locally rare varieties. These will be planted out in project orchards by volunteers, and protected by guards bought using monies released by HLF from contingencies. We hope to add to this by assisting project orchard owners to apply for PTES grants for gapping up orchards. There has been huge interest from orchard owners within the project for obtaining rare and historically important species and in becoming a 'guardian' for them. Within the AONB a 'lost' nut arboretum has been identified and will hopefully be restored.

12. There has been an increase in awareness of the importance of traditional orchards and in making them economically viable. Within the AONB this has led to one owner establishing 'glamping' in their project orchard, enquiries from a local wood turner about using orchard prunings for his expanding business, and a community shop making apple juice from local orchards for fundraising.

13. We have able to provide general advice to traditional orchard owners not included in our project and to signpost them to sources of help and expertise. These have included orchard owners in the AONB in Castlemorton, Malvern Wells and Storridge.

14. TCTOP has also provided information locally about grants for orchard work, in particular the PTES 'gapping up' grants.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

15. Worcestershire County Council (WCC) is the accountable body for the Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project. At the commencement of the project the Council provided HR support in the recruitment and appointment of the Project Officer. WCC Finance provides assistance with quarterly claims to HLF in return for a small book keeping payment. As one of the county based skill hubs, WCC Countryside Service is receiving project funding in return for the delivery of a range of TCTOP services.

Recommendation

16 The Committee is recommended to:

a) Note the progress made in delivery of the TCTOP after one year;

- b) Promote the project by signposting potential volunteers and orchard owners to the project website www.tctop.org.uk and to Facebook (type TCTOP), and
- c) Continue to support the project.

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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**MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
 20 NOVEMBER 2015**
**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND 2015/16 – UPDATE
 REPORT**
Background

1. The table below shows the Sustainable Development Fund's grants for the financial year 2015/16. The budget is £24,000 and currently £15,750 is committed.

Summary

Applicant	Project	Grant
Colwall Orchard Group	'Your Heritage' Apple Packing shed renovation	£2000
Malvern Hills District Council	Malvern Munch – Local Food Walk around the Malverns. (completed)	£500
Malvern Hills Conservators	Tank Quarry Interpretation	£6,500
Malvern Hills District Council	Teme Valley Walk	£500
Site Designs	A new look at how to deal with dog fouling on the hills by generating gas from fermenting it.	£2,000
Key IQ	Geocentre Walks	£1,750
H&W Earth Heritage Trust	Conservation by volunteers of geosites within the AONB. (3 sites done)	£1,500
Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust	Building with Stones Project	£1,000
	Total committed	£15,750
Under Consideration		
Jamboree	Disabled buggy hire scheme from the Geocentre Upper Colwall, to go up the Worcestershire Beacon	£500 (est)
Malvern Elements	Rethatching iron age hut for an authentic iron age education.	£1,500 (est)
Plum Pox Eradication	Pox eradication through rejuvenation of techniques and machinery.	£1,000 (est)

Recommendation

- 1. The Committee is requested to:**
 - a) Note and comment on the report.**
 - b) Contact David Armitage with any projects that might be suitable for this fund.**

Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
20 NOVEMBER 2015**INFORMATION ITEMS**

**Management Plan ref.
(abridged)**

LP2 Restore distinctive landscapes and landscape features that have been significantly degraded.

ProjectLandscape Management Plan

The Three Counties Agricultural Society has agreed in principle to produce a Landscape Management Plan for the Three Counties Showground. The AONB Unit is in discussion with Landscape Architects and the Director and Operations Manager at the Showground about the form and content of this plan.

Orchard planting

New fruit trees have been ordered as part of a two year plan to restock the traditional orchard at the Three Counties Showground. It is expected that the first batch of trees will be planted in December 2015.

Mathon Court Woodlands

Having been in an unusual scheme, the Habitat Scheme, administered through DEFRA, whereby land was fallowed for two decades, the ground around Mathon Court has been taken over by thickets of thin trees. All agree that this is unique landscape within the area and the MHAONB Unit is working with the owner to understand how to manage this ground both for game and landscape objectives.

Landscape Grants

We continue our small landscape grants scheme to assist those who fall outside the criteria of the major grant schemes. We have two projects in the area to plant and restore hedgerows. We have also been approached by the owner of a 'famous' walnut orchard who needs advice on how to tackle some of its problems. The fame is national amongst walnut aficionados – but expertise on how to manage the site is hard to find.

BP3 – Enhance the wildlife value of the countryside and achieve greater connectivity between key habitats within the AONB and between

Making Space for Nature

Work to complete Phase 1 of this project (data collection and analysis) is almost complete. It is hoped that conversations with land owners will commence shortly and will lead to some targeted habitat enhancement thereafter.

the AONB and the countryside beyond

HP2 Identify and improve the evidence base of locally important heritage assets of the AONB in order to understand better the significance and condition of the historic environment, which will underpin future policy.

CO2 – Develop an enhanced sense of ownership...among local communities...through opportunities for involvement in consultation activities

BDO1 The distinctive character and natural beauty of the AONB will be fully reflected in planning policy and guidance.

BDP9 Maintain and promote a programme of guidance on key planning and design issues appropriate to the AONB, aimed at planning authorities, developers and other interested parties, that takes account of the special

Rare fruit tree varieties

The AONB Unit is managing a project to grow rare varieties of fruit tree for planting out in traditional orchards in the three counties. Funding is from Natural England's Innovation Fund.

Bat Survey Work

The Worcestershire Bat Group has recently completed road transect surveys of bats in the northern part of the AONB. Results will help to inform future management and project work in the area.

Local List

The AONB Unit met with Malvern Wells Parish Council to discuss and support the nomination of heritage assets in the AONB to the Local List held by Malvern Hills District Council.

Neighbourhood Plans

The AONB Unit continues to work with members of Colwall Parish Council, Wellington Heath Parish Council, Cradley Parish Council and Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council to support the development of Neighbourhood Plans.

South Worcestershire Development Plan

Following the examination in public the SWDP Inspector has requested that the allocated site for 35 units in the AONB off Hanley Road be deleted from the Plan.

Large (agricultural) buildings

A project to provide guidance on how best to integrate large buildings into the various landscapes of the AONB has been commissioned.

distinctiveness of the area.

TP2 Promote the AONB and adjoining areas as a sustainable destination in its own right.

TRP6 Develop dedicated routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders within the AONB and between the AONB and surrounding areas.

RP6 – Establish a strategy and programme of action to realise the health benefits of the AONB.

New AONB film

Filming has commenced on a 'Landscapes of the AONB' production using an unmanned aerial vehicle. The resultant film will be available via You Tube.

Shared use route

Early discussions and preliminary survey work has taken place to explore the potential for developing a shared-use route between Malvern and the Three Counties Showground, making use of a dismantled railway line.

Health agenda

Initial discussions have taken place with the Malvern Hills Health Improvement Co-ordinator over the role of the AONB and AONB Partnership in promoting healthy living.

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

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