

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

10 NOVEMBER 2023

INFORMATION ITEMS

**Management Plan ref.
(abridged)**

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

Project

Management Plan Review

Natural England recently conducted an informal consultation with Protected Landscapes on draft Management Plan review guidance. This is a long document intended to inform the review of both AONB and National Park Management Plans. Concerns have been expressed regarding the ability of AONB Teams, especially the smaller ones, to deliver against all of the guidance. Some preparatory work on the MP review will take place over the next few months, prior to the full review next year.

See FiPL update report.

Malvern Wells Parish Council

A pilot to manage the grassland on the village green as a hay meadow has been completed this year. Some additional mowing was required due to the wet summer but the project seems to have been successful.

AONB Landowners events

An event on land and water management took place in Colwall in June (24 attendees). An event on managing soils to benefit farming took place in Mathon in September (20 attendees). Presentations for both can be found on the MHAONB website
<https://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/landowner-group/>
An event on regenerative farming with livestock is scheduled to take place on 6 November.

Meadow restoration

Wildflower meadow seed was harvested from donor sites, dried and then strewn onto 7 ha of grassland using volunteers.

**BP4 Improve
knowledge and
understanding of the
AONB's biodiversity**

Grassland surveys

8 grassland sites (including those reseeded last year) were surveyed by an ecologist in June. Results of a repeat survey of previously reseeded highway verges can be found at

[Botanical-survey-on-MH-AONB-pilot-verges-2023.pdf](#)
(malvernhillsaonb.org.uk)

Colwall Hedges Project

All survey work for this project has now been carried out, using a consultant and local volunteers and a public launch is planned for the New Year, encouraging local people to understand the value of hedges both visually and for wildlife and to plant and maintain hedges.

Water quality monitoring

Discussions with the Severn Rivers Trust have taken about using their embryonic citizen science project to monitor water quality at sites within the AONB (on the Teme catchment). AONB landowners have been contacted and 6 are interested in water quality being monitored on their land.

HP1 Conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment of the AONB

Hope End Registered Park management

Certain fields within the park were cut for hay for the first time in many years this summer. Perimeter fencing to part of the park is currently being improved with a view to bringing sheep back onto the park for aftermath grazing.

Dingwood Management Plan and works

Phase 1 of Dingwood Park restoration was complete by March 23', with parkland tree planting, shelter belt infrastructure and pond restoration. Phase two, being undertaken in this financial year, will look to improve landscape value, restore the traditional orchard and improve conservation value of the hedging.

FP5 Support appropriate measures to monitor and control pests, diseases and invasive non-native plant and animal species to protect food production and biodiversity resources.

There is a potential FiPL Project in the pipeline for a Deer/Game Larder, although this project is just in the initial phases of being created.

BDO1 The distinctive character and natural beauty of the AONB will be fully reflected in the development and

Planning

The AONB Team helped in providing comments subsequently submitted by the National Association of AONBs, in respect of the recent UK Government consultation on extending permitted development rights into protected landscapes.

**implementation
of consistent
statutory land use
planning policy
and guidance
across the AONB.**

At the time of writing, during this financial year, the AONB Unit has already made representation on 75 planning applications, including appeals.

The AONB Unit formally responded to Welland's Regulation 16 Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) draft and has provided Colwall Parish Council with comments as they begin their review of their NDP.

**TP2 Provide a Quality
public realm with good
access and facilities
that attract tourists**

Malvern Wells Information Boards

We are still working with Malvern Wells Parish Council to put up some information boards about grassland management on sites being managed by the Council.

Rebranding AONBs

On the agenda.

Gateway signs

As part of the re-branding we are working with Colwall Parish Council and Herefordshire Council Highways to look at the possibility of putting a gateway sign at the entrance of the village.

**IP3 Raise awareness of
the MHAONB and the
significance of its
designation**

AONB Tour

The annual AONB tour took place in September, providing an opportunity for those involved with work in the AONB to take a look at projects completed this year. Visits were made to Eastnor to look at Access fund work, to Barton Court, Colwall to look at renewable energy and heritage projects and to hear about the work of blind walking group, Sense Adventures, before looking at projects at Colwall Village Garden and orchards.

Training for Parish Councils

The AONB Team is hosting a webinar for Parish Council members on 28th November. This is to raise awareness of the AONB and the work of the partnership, as well as to explain recent changes to do with rebranding and legislation. It will also provide an opportunity to tee up next year's Management Plan review.

Training for Herefordshire Council staff

The AONB Team will be 'briefing' planners and other officers at Herefordshire Council on 29 November 2023 to raise awareness of the AONB and the work of the partnership, as well as to explain recent changes to do with rebranding and legislation, and the implications this has for strategic planning and development management, as well as a general planning discussion.

Vision 2040: people are connected emotionally, and spiritually to the area.

RP6 Increase the range of opportunities for those with restricted mobility and health impairments to experience the AONB.

State of the AONB report

Progress is being made on the data collection for this report, despite some difficulties. The University of Worcester has been appointed to assist. The AONB Team continues to await information from government about the Outcomes Framework which will set targets for each Protected Landscape, linked to the <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>.

Art in the Landscape Project

The National Association of AONBs has made a bid to Arts Council England for funding for arts projects within individual AONBs. The purpose of this is to use the arts to engage people with the issues of our time around Nature. The outcome of the bid will be known by mid-November, providing a chance to bid for funding for arts projects in 2024.

Malvern walking festival

The AONB led two well attended walks– a walk for a cycling group in June, for National Cycling week, and a walk exploring ‘power in the landscape’ as part of Malvern Walking Festival.

Our programme of work to improve accessibility in the AONB will be added to following an award of £4,000 extra Access funding from DEFRA. This will be used to replace stiles with gates at Eastnor and to make track improvements above the Gullet.

£50,000 of access funding has been awarded for 2024-25 and project ideas for this are being invited

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

Specific Contact Points for this report

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