



# Agenda

## Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Friday, 18 November 2016, 10.00 am  
Council House, Malvern Hills District  
Council**

**Avenue Road  
Malvern  
WR14 3AF**

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**Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee**  
**Friday, 18 November 2016, 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 (Vice Chairman)	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**

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1	<b>Apologies and Substitutes</b>	
2	<b>Declaration of Interests</b>	
3	<b>To elect a Chairman</b>	

Agenda produced and published by Simon Mallinson, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP

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

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

Date of Issue: Friday, 4 November 2016

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5	<b>Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting</b> For the meeting on 29 April 2016	
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9	<b>Conservation management on the Suckley Brook and other water courses</b> To receive a report from report from Paul Esrich, AONB Partnership Manager.	13 - 16
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## **MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 18 NOVEMBER 2016**

### **HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN THE MALVERN HILLS AONB**

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#### **Background**

1. The following AONB Management Plan policy is relevant to this work:
  - a) RP6 – Establish a strategy and programme of action to realise the health benefits of the Malvern Hills AONB.
2. Ecotherapy is a new coinage to express an old wisdom; the natural environment has many health benefits for humans, both therapeutic and prophylactic. Though many felt this to be true, it lacked tested evidence to support it. That is now changing with many studies evaluating the beneficial effects of the natural world and ecotherapy. This is especially the case in the field of mental health where it is now widely recognised that even just looking at greenery and views adds to the joy of living, and improves moods. The Malvern Hills AONB clearly offers a fantastic resource of beautiful landscapes and access to nature which benefit the physical and mental health of so many people but which could, potentially, benefit so many more.
3. These revelations are now working their way into policies such as those within the Malvern Hills District Health and Well-being Plan 2016-21, which acknowledges we should make more use of 'our superb environment', to meet the objectives it sets itself.
4. To help achieve these objectives, Malvern Hills District Council has employed a Physical Activity and Well Being Officer, both to encourage fitness within the Council, but also with the citizens of the area. Staff from the MHAONB Unit have met with her and hope to engage with her ideas and programmes.
5. In the meantime there have been two initiatives to encourage the sometimes-forgotten citizens to take their ease in the fresh air. The first is the Trampler project, and has been spoken of before. The SDF helped to fund the lease of an electric mobility scooter, known as a Trampler, which allows those with limited mobility to ascend to the Worcestershire Beacon and to enjoy the fantastic views afforded from the highest point on the Malvern Hills. It is run by Jamboree who have the café at the Wyche Innovation Centre, and their combination of Trampler ride, followed by café lunch has proved popular with families and friends of relatives using the Trampler. In this way, many more than just the Trampler pilot benefit from the 'ecotherapy'. The publicity from the project has attracted the donation of another, barely used Trampler vehicle to join the fleet.
6. The second project has been a collaboration with the local branch of the National Childbirth Trust (NCT). The SDF provided a small grant to buy some sturdy baby slings to allow new mothers (and fathers!) to walk on the hills with their charges. The

NCT has organised and publicised regular walks which have been well attended, with 15-20 people turning up most weeks.

7. One of the aims of the project was to reach the mothers for whom wealth and health were all too linked. The NCT has targeted with their publicity, connection points such as the Malvern Food Banks, to recruit new mothers to the walks. The offer of the free use of the baby slings is an enticement; and Malvern Hills Conservators have kindly helped out with car parking; so removing financial barriers.

8. It seems the combination of fresh air, exercise and the social side of walking with a group of people in a similar situation is working well. Of particular note is that a number of the new mothers are medical professionals, experiencing the uplifting effect of the walk for themselves; they would recommend such 'ecotherapy' to their patients. And so the health benefits of living within, or near to the MHAONB, should percolate into the local institutions.

## **Recommendation**

### **9. The Committee is recommended to:**

- 1. Note and comment on the report,**
- 2. Consider and discuss other opportunities through which the Partnership could engage with the 'Health and Well-being' sector.**

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Email: [worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk)

### Specific Contact Points for this report

David Armitage, Assistant Manager, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

Tel: 01684 560616

Email: [darmitage@malvernhillsaonb.org.uk](mailto:darmitage@malvernhillsaonb.org.uk)

## **MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **18 NOVEMBER 2016**

## **A PILOT APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT OF GRASS VERGES**

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### **Background**

1. The following AONB Management Plan policies are relevant to this work:
  - a) BP2 – Restore the condition of degraded habitats in line with local and national biodiversity priorities.
  - b) BP3 - Enhance the wildlife value of the countryside and achieve greater buffering and connectivity between key habitats within the AONB and between the AONB and the countryside beyond.
  - c) BP6 - Improve knowledge and understanding of the AONB's biodiversity, to enable evaluation of the effectiveness of policies and actions.
  
2. Declining numbers of all types of pollinators have been seen throughout the United Kingdom (UK). In the UK around 70 fruit, vegetable and cereal crops are purely insect pollinated. The economic value of honey bees and bumble bees alone as pollinators of commercially grown crops in the UK has been estimated at over £200 million per year. Pollinators are vital to our food supply and are particularly important in counties such as Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire with a large agricultural/horticultural industry.
  
3. In October 2015 Worcestershire County Council designated Worcestershire a 'pollinator friendly county' to promote the protection of pollinating insects and their habitats. With this commitment the County Council seeks to make a direct difference through the management of County Council owned land and by spreading information on biodiversity to help residents and businesses play their part in increasing local habitats, promoting bee keeping and planting pollinator friendly plants.
  
4. Much land in the AONB to the east of the Malvern Hills is intensively managed, either for agriculture or for other uses, for example, the Three Counties Showground. Data suggests that very little of this land is covered by agri-environment support schemes and that biodiversity is in short-supply. However, the area is bordered to the west and south by land which is of national importance for biodiversity, much of which is owned and managed by the Malvern Hills Conservators. In addition, the area contains a small number of sites which have a high nature conservation interest, such as St Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve and Hollybed Farm Nature Reserve.
  
5. This area (see map in Appendix 1) has been identified by the AONB Unit as one which might benefit from a 'landscape scale approach' to nature conservation. This approach involves considering the whole landscape, managing it appropriately to make it more ecologically coherent and integrating a range of different land uses in a

way that is sympathetic to the environment, in order to benefit both wildlife and people. The approach is very widely endorsed and supported, including by government through the Natural Environment White Paper. In 2013 the AONB Unit articulated the following aim for the project area in Appendix 1: 'To improve, in a selective and targeted manner, the connectivity, buffering and management of a mosaic of habitats...in order to benefit a range of locally characteristic and significant species.'

## Roadside verges

6. In a landscape dominated by intensive management, highway verges provide a potentially valuable space in which wildlife, including pollinating insects, can live and even thrive. In some places verges may be the last remaining stretches of natural habitat available (NB over 97% of England's meadows have been destroyed since the 1930s). Verges also have a strategic function, acting as corridors which connect areas of high nature conservation interest and which allow wildlife to move from one site to another. The national charity Plantlife reports that 21 of the 25 nation's favourite wildflowers grow on road verges. With 30 million drivers in the UK they are probably also the most frequently viewed habitat, providing many people with their only regular daily contact with nature.

7. Ensuring the safety of road users is obviously of paramount importance for those responsible for managing grass verges. However, traditionally many verges have been managed to keep them 'neat and tidy' and this philosophy may still prevail in some areas. The chief problem with such verge management is that it cuts many wildflowers down before they have had a chance to flower (thus denying nectar to insects) and to seed and complete their life cycle. The build-up of a thick layer or thatch of cut grass on the verge can also stifle the growth of more sensitive and often less common grasses and flowers. It can also lead to soil enrichment which further damages the potential survival of such species, favouring instead those which are stronger and more competitive.

8. In recent times many Highway Authorities have begun to look at altering verge management regimes, partly to reflect reducing budgets but also in recognition of the environmental function verges can perform. Heightened publicity and campaigns from the likes of Plantlife have bolstered such efforts. Many Highway Authorities also designate and manage Roadside Verge Nature Reserves (RVNRs). These are usually short sections of verge which are known to have very significant botanical interest and which require/would benefit from bespoke management.

9. Over a period of many months the Malvern Hills AONB Unit has been in discussion with the Worcestershire Highway Authority about the possibility of introducing a pilot scheme to manage verges differently in one part of the AONB (similar to the area shown in Appendix 1). This is not about varied, bespoke management but rather adopting a different regime which can be applied uniformly across a larger landscape area. It is recognised that simplicity is likely to be one of the key success factors. Key elements of the approach which have been discussed thus far are as follows:

- One annual cut at the end of the summer/early autumn,
- Removal of arisings,
- Tailored management to control undesirable species,



10. The possibility of a 3-5 year pilot based on the above approach and commencing in 2017 has, initially, received a positive response from the Highway Authority. The continuation of any management works needed to maintain sight lines and to maintain health and safety is taken as a given. There are still a number of issues that need to be discussed further and resolved, for example, determining the best way to cut and collect the grass and dispose of it. Clearly cost is a key issue. Whilst there should be some savings arising from a single cut there will be additional costs involved in collection and disposal operations. It is not expected that the Highway Authority should have to bear all such costs and interested partners, including the AONB Partnership, are also likely to play a role.

11. There is little point in undertaking a pilot without any evidence of whether it has been successful. To this end the AONB Partnership commissioned a survey of the botanical composition of road verges in the proposed project area. This was completed in the summer of 2016. The data yielded by the survey acts as a baseline against which future management work will be measured. The AONB Unit will be responsible for the necessary follow-up surveys.

## **Recommendation**

### **12. The Committee is recommended to:**

- 1. Note and comment on the report,**
- 2. Not to broadcast the information in paragraphs 9-11 until the AONB Unit and Highway Authority have had a chance to discuss proposals with relevant Parish Councils,**
- 3. Recognise that this is a pilot project, based in a nationally important landscape and operating in conjunction with the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership, that cannot be rolled out to other parts of the county at this time.**

## **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

Costs of this pilot scheme to Worcestershire County Council and the AONB Partnership have not yet been scoped.

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Email: [worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk)

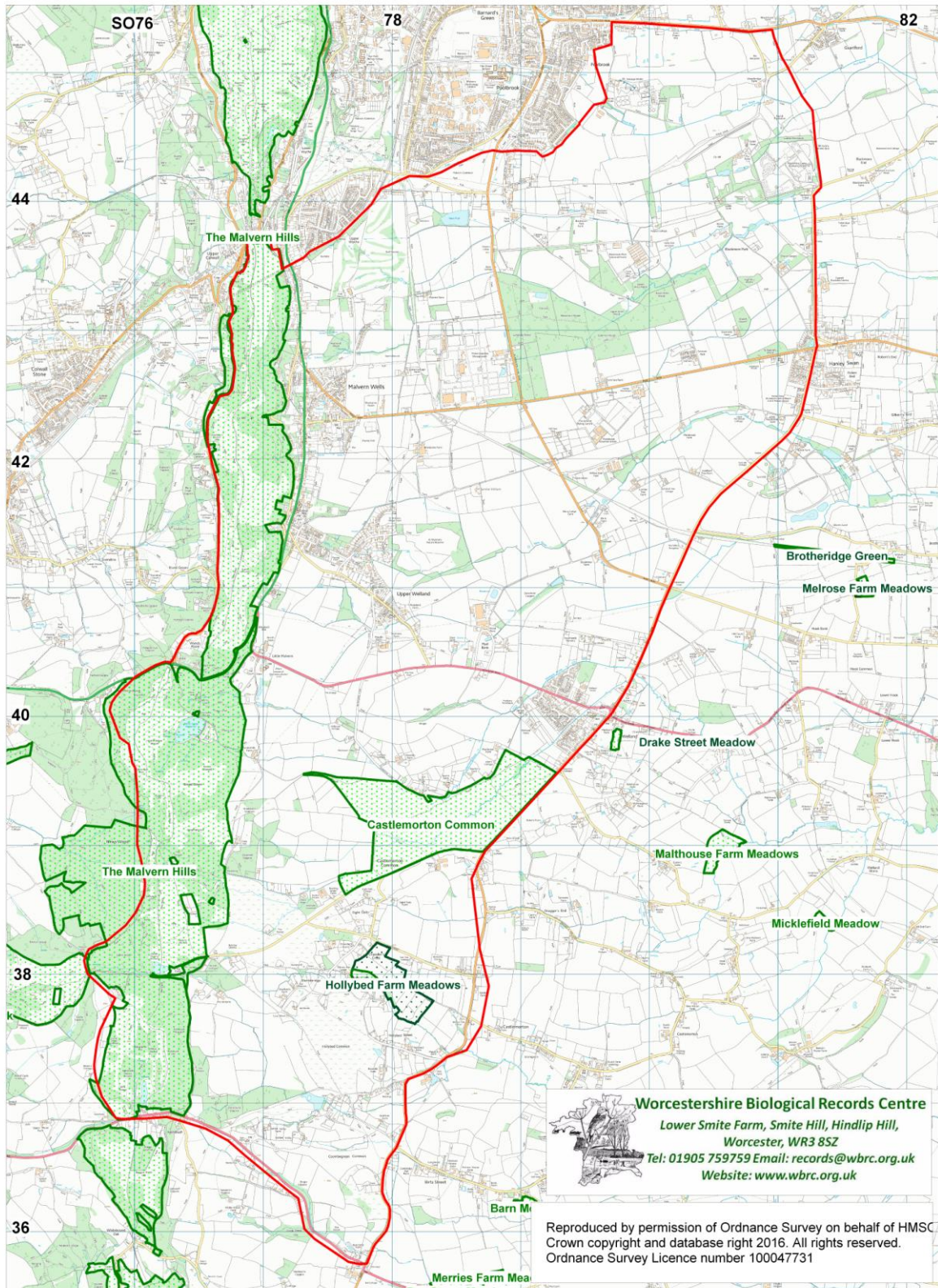
### Specific Contact Points for this report

David Armitage, Assistant Manager, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

Tel: 01684 560616

Email: [darmitage@malvernhillsaonb.org.uk](mailto:darmitage@malvernhillsaonb.org.uk)

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## **MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 18 NOVEMBER 2016**

### **ASH DIEBACK DISEASE IN THE MALVERN HILLS AONB**

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#### **Background**

1. The following AONB Management Plan policies are relevant to this work:
  - a. LP3 – Identify and promote opportunities for positive landscape change to landowners, managers, government and all those with an influence over land.
  - b. FP5 Support appropriate measures to monitor and control pests, diseases and invasive non-native plant and animal species that damage biodiversity.
  
2. Chalara dieback of ash, also known as Chalara or ash dieback, is a disease of ash trees caused by a fungus called *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*. (The fungus was previously called *Chalara fraxinea*, hence the name of the disease). Chalara causes leaf loss, crown dieback and bark lesions in affected trees. Once a tree is infected the disease is usually fatal, either directly or indirectly by weakening the tree to the point where it succumbs more readily to attacks by other pests or pathogens, especially Armillaria fungi (honey fungus).
  
3. The first signs of Chalara in Britain were reported to be from a nursery in Buckinghamshire in February 2012, although it has recently been shown that the fungus has been present in the country for a longer period of time. Recent figures from the Forestry Commission indicate that the disease has now been formally identified and recorded in over 50% of 10km<sup>2</sup> grid squares in England. Practitioners believe that the real incidence of the disease is likely to be much higher and is now endemic, with the current figure simply being down to lack of informed monitoring on the ground.
  
4. Chalara arrived in the UK from continental Europe where the disease has been active over a longer time period. European countries that have had the disease since 1992 have experienced a 95-98% mortality of common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) which is the native ash tree in the UK. Other *Fraxinus* species are also affected to similar or lesser extents. There is no current evidence to contradict the thought that the impact will be similar in the UK. Estimates vary but some sources put the number of ash trees in England at over 2.5billion with an estimate of over 50% of these falling outside of woodland situations. The disease can lead to the death of young ash trees within one growing season, but may take longer to affect mature trees. However, even in more mature trees decline from apparent full health to death can happen within just a couple of growing seasons. The eastern and south eastern counties of England and Devon have been the first to be particularly hit by the disease. A number of local authorities have now scoped the problem and started to put plans in place for dealing with it. Kent County Council, for example, is dealing with the disease as a plant health emergency under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. In Suffolk a recent

recognition of the scale of the disease has led to a doubling of the highways budget for managing trees and a commitment to allocate reserve funds to this to assist in management over the next 5 years. Local Authority estimates for the cost of dealing with the immediate impacts of Chalara vary from about £300 to £1500 per highway side tree. The current average estimate is of 40,000 highway impacting trees per highway authority.

## **Ash and the Malvern Hills AONB**

5. There is no estimate on the number of ash trees in the Malvern Hills AONB but we do know that the number will be high. Ash forms a significant component of many woodlands in the AONB, especially in the west of the area. Locally, ash may account for 80% or more of more recent woods and copses but even in some more established broadleaved woods it is likely to account for 30-40%. In addition, ash trees are common in many hedgerows and in some fields and wood pasture across the area, often as mature or veteran trees where they play a very significant role in supporting biodiversity and contributing to landscape character.

6. Landowners and many public bodies will rightly be focussed on the practical and financial implications of dealing with ash dieback, assuming it becomes prevalent in this part of the country. A key preoccupation of the AONB Partnership should be the potential impact it will have on the natural beauty of the area and on the development of a plan for how this might be mitigated. Whilst the impact of the disease in a woodland could be very marked, other tree species will, over time, replace ash and some species of wildlife will probably benefit from the changes which are brought about in these dynamic habitats. However, the landscape impact on other, non-wooded landscapes in the AONB may be much higher.

7. To help to scope the size of this potential problem in the wider landscape staff working for the AONB Unit carried out a very rapid, car-based survey of the AONB between 16 September and 26 October 2016. Key routes through and around the AONB were broken down into roughly equal survey sections based on either 1km square grid line boundaries or distances between road junctions. Each section was driven slowly to enable estimation of the coverage of ash trees within hedgerows or other roadside boundaries and within fields adjacent to the road. Notes were made on the general abundance of ash as a component of the treed landscape and the visual prominence of ash alongside any other tree species that were also present. The proportion of young, mature and veteran ash trees were estimated and a judgement made – using a Red, Amber and Green categorization – as to what the visual impact on the landscape within that survey section that might be if ash dieback were to cause the death of those trees.

8. A number of individual, prominent ash trees were photographed, measured (Circumference at Breast Height) and the general condition of their canopy noted. Other photographs were taken at various locations along the survey routes.

9. The results of the survey assessment are currently being mapped and further analysis will be carried out to identify those areas or landscape types within the AONB which might be most vulnerable to the effects of ash dieback and the potential extent of the visual impact that might result.



10. Once the results of this work are known, consideration could be given to the development of a recovery plan which might comprise:

- Identification of desirable replacement trees in different locations and settings,
- Early discussions with landowners to establish levels of interest in planting new trees to replace specimens of,
- Development of a grant assistance package.

11. It is recognised, of course, that no one will want to rush to replace trees which are not yet dead or dying. Indeed, advice from the likes of the Forestry Commission is not to fell ash trees when this is not needed. There is likely to be a small percentage of the stock that will be tolerant or resistant to the disease and it is important that these trees are allowed to survive. However, given the time it takes for newly planted trees to reach maturity it would also be well to be prepared for recovery action once it can be confirmed that notable ash trees in the AONB are being impacted by Chalara.

## **Recommendation**

- 1. The Committee is recommended to:**
  - 1. Note and comment on the report,**
  - 2. Discuss the merits and scope of a recovery plan,**
  - 3. Identify landowners who might be interested in early work on establishing a replacement for ash in the landscape.**

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Email: [worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk)

### Specific Contact Points for this report

James Bisset, Principal Countryside Officer, Herefordshire Council

Email: [jbisset@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jbisset@herefordshire.gov.uk)

Paul Esrich, Manager, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

Tel: 01684 560616

Email: [pesrich@malvernhillsaonb.org.uk](mailto:pesrich@malvernhillsaonb.org.uk)

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## **MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 18 NOVEMBER 2016**

### **CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT ON THE SUCKLEY BROOK AND OTHER WATER COURSES**

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#### **Background**

1. The following AONB Management Plan policies are relevant to this work:
  - a) BP1 – Conserve, enhance and expand key habitats and populations of key species in line with local biodiversity priorities and the England Biodiversity Strategy 2020
  - b) BP2 – Restore the condition of degraded habitats in line with local and national biodiversity priorities.
  - c) FP5 – Support appropriate measures to monitor and control pests, diseases and invasive non-native plant and animal species that damage biodiversity resources.
  - d) FP7 - Identify and promote good agricultural practices that encourage:
    - sustainable utilisation of soil, minimising erosion
    - effective water catchment management
    - avoidance of direct pollution and measures to reduce diffuse pollution
    - farm waste minimisation and recycling.
  
2. The Suckley Brook is a tributary of the Leigh Brook, flowing into the AONB near the village of Suckley, before the brook then reaches the Teme at Leigh. Data collected by the Environment Agency reveals that the brook, in common with many other water courses in the AONB, is failing a number of Water Framework Directive parameters, particularly in relation to biological, invertebrate and physiochemical components. Under the Water Framework Directive all water bodies are required to achieve 'good' condition by 2027.
  
3. In 2011 the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership commissioned the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, working alongside the Environment Agency, to undertake a survey of the Leigh and Cradley Brooks in the AONB. The resultant survey identified a number of locations where land management operations were deemed to be contributing to poor condition of the water course. Land just to the west of Suckley church was identified as one of these locations, where cattle in adjoining fields were gaining unfettered access to the water course, eroding and widening the banks and causing sedimentation and nutrient enrichment downstream. This has knock-on effects for a variety of species such as spawning fish. The brook in this location was also heavily shaded by extensive vegetation, which is known to impact negatively on the ecology of the water course.
  
4. The Severn Rivers Trust is an independent environmental charity established to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of the rivers, streams, watercourses and water bodies in the Severn catchment, and to advance the education of the public in the management of water and the wider environment.

The Trust is in receipt of Heritage Lottery Funding to develop a four year project called the Springs of Rivers. This project aims to bring together a diverse partnership to work alongside the Trust on the River Teme and some of its tributaries. Key objectives include wildlife and habitat enhancement, water quality improvements and flood alleviation through practices such as fencing, bankside coppicing and the removal of invasive species. A significant amount of time will be spent through the project engaging with schools and local communities that are linked together by the river. The Phase 2 application for the project delivery is due to be submitted on December 6 2016. A decision is expected in March 2017, with the delivery phase expected to begin in May 2017. The budget for the Springs of Rivers project is £3.9m.

## **Conservation management**

5. The Severn Rivers Trust has recently been working with local volunteers on a project to identify and monitor the population of Signal Crayfish in the Suckley Brook. This non-native species was first introduced to Britain in the 1970s and has now spread to many of our rivers and streams. It out-competes our native white-clawed crayfish which is now classed as endangered on the IUCN List of Endangered Species. It also has serious impacts on the local freshwater ecology. Monitoring has established the extent of the signal crayfish population in the Suckley Brook catchment and efforts are now underway to eradicate this species from the area. The results from this work are being fed into a PhD project assessing the status of the signal crayfish population at a national level and researching the optimum methods for controlling it. Monitoring equipment for work on the Suckley Brook has been part funded by a grant from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund.

6. The Severn Rivers Trust, AONB Partnership and a local landowner have also been working on that part of the Suckley Brook west of Suckley church to address a range of land management issues which have been contributing to poor condition of the water course. In particular, some bankside vegetation, including diseased alder trees, have been thinned and cleared and new stock fencing has been erected. At one point where cattle are still able to access the water course to drink, the banks have been re-profiled and reinforced with stone, again with the intention of preventing sedimentation. In another area hard-standing has been provided around a cattle feeder to reduce poaching and sedimentation and nutrient input to the water course. These works were managed by the Severn Rivers Trust and were funded by Ringway as part of its corporate responsibility programme and by the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership.

## **Recommendation**

### **7 The Committee is recommended to:**

- **Note and comment on the report.**
- **Identify locations within the lower Teme Catchment in or adjoining the AONB where the objectives of the Springs of Rivers project could be met with the support of willing landowners.**
- **Identify existing volunteer groups which may be interested in receiving training and/or working alongside the Severn Rivers Trust on the Springs of Rivers project.**

## **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

7. No ongoing financial commitments. All required legal permissions were secured in advance, for example, consent for in-stream works from the South Worcestershire Land Drainage Partnership.

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Email: [worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk)

### Specific Contact Points for this report

Paul Esrich, Manager, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

Tel: 01684 560616

Email: [pesrich@malvernhillsaonb.org.uk](mailto:pesrich@malvernhillsaonb.org.uk)

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**MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
 18 NOVEMBER 2016**
**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND 2016/17 – UPDATE  
 REPORT**


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**Background**

1. The table below shows the Sustainable Development Fund's grants for the financial year 2016/17. The current budget for projects is c £23,000. The SDF panel has approved the following grants so far this year.

**Summary**

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Grant</b>
Hartpury Heritage Centre	Plum pox eradication unit restoration	£1,000
Butterfly Conservation	Conservation work on Grayling habitat	£2,500
H&W Earth Heritage Trust	Geosite conservation with volunteers	£1,500
Site Designs	Biodigester modifications and digestate analysis.	£1,500
Three Counties Orchard Project	Orchard insect suits.	£870
Malvern Hills Conservators	Nature of Malvern Book	£3,500
Guy Tustin	Timber grab for coppice working	£1,000
Friends of Coombegreen	Learn and graze about the common	£782
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust	Wildlife monitoring equipment for volunteers at Blackhouse Wood.	£1,594
Colwall Village Society	Colwall folk booklet	£500
Severn Rivers Trust	Crayfish monitoring and management	£1775
National Childbirth Trust	Walking with baby slings on the Malverns	£586
<b>Total</b>		<b>£17,107</b>

**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**

### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Email: [worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk)

### Specific Contact Points for this report

David Armitage, Assistant manager, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

Tel: 01684 560616

Email: [darmitage@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:darmitage@worcestershire.gov.uk)

**MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**18 NOVEMBER 2016****INFORMATION ITEMS**

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**Management Plan ref.**  
**(abridged)**

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

**Project**Orchard planting

The second batch of fruit trees needed to restock the traditional orchard at the Three Counties Showground should be planted out in late November 2016.

Innovation Fund – Orchard Planting

Natural England, through its Innovation Fund, has provided grants to plant one new orchard on an old orchard site, and to help restock four other orchards with traditional orchard trees. At the time of writing we believe we have the sites settled and the varieties chosen. The planting should take place this winter.

Route to the Hills

The AONB Units sits on both the board, and has been actively involved in the project management group of this £482,000 project run by Malvern Hills District Council. It aims to provide a route from Gt Malvern Station to Rose Bank Gardens in Malvern and thus onto the hills. Along the route there will be various installations to tell of the glories of Malvern. After a long run-up, some of the installations should appear before Christmas.

Landscape Grants

Much of this year's grants will be concentrated on restoring or replanting traditional orchards. Another two sites within the AONB are, at the time of writing, going to receive advice on the varieties to plant, and then hopefully a grant to plant.

Burying Power Cables in the AONB

We are in a new spending period for the next 8 years. The nominal budget is £2.3 million for the AONBs and National Parks of the West Midlands. However the actual spendable budget may be much smaller than that, as there were a number of unfinished projects from the last spending period, and the costs from then, become current costs. Western Power Distribution, the budget holders are currently calculating the available budget.

**LP5 Undertake surveys and research to better understand and monitor the condition, and rate of change, of landscape character**

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

#### Landscape condition monitoring

A report documenting 10 years of landscape change is now being finalised. Guidance on how to monitor environmental change in the AONB in the future is also being prepared. This is partnership work with the University of Worcester.

#### Making Space for Nature

Additional mapping has been completed. The Working Group established to progress this work has met. Creation of a draft vision/management plan for the northern project area and scoping for a new project to collect additional data should be completed by end of December 2016.

#### Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project

Our mid-term evaluation showed that good progress has been made across most areas of the project and it was approved by the HLF monitor. Key achievements thus far:

- 17 Community Champions recruited to the project and have attended 4 training days. So far they have given back over 300 hours to the project.
- 300 nationally rare 'local' fruit trees have been propagated and will be re-introduced into the areas they came from this Autumn.
- 31 traditional orchards are being restored by TCTOP volunteers
- Over 250 people have been involved with project activities to date.
- A project film is being made by a professional film maker and volunteers.

More information is available at: [www.tctop.org.uk](http://www.tctop.org.uk)

#### Local List

Work on a project to identify locally important buildings in one parish has stalled. Consideration is being given to other means of delivery.



**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.**

**BDP8 Support the recycling, re-use and limited extraction of small quantities of locally distinctive building materials, such as Malvern stone, where this is needed to help retain local distinctiveness in the built environment.**

**IP5 Raise awareness of being in the Malvern Hills as a special place to encourage sustainable activity.**

#### Neighbourhood Development Plans

Progress has been made with the development of a number of NDPs in the area. The AONB Unit has commented on a Regulation 16 draft plan (the final stage before referendum) for Cradley. It has also discussed advice and support which could be provided to Malvern Wells Parish Council should it wish to progress with preparing a plan. Natural England staff from across the country are visiting the area as part of training on Landscape Assessment in order to reference the landscape led approach which underpins a number of NDPs in the AONB

#### Guidance

Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development in the AONB has now been finalised and is available at:

[http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/guidance\\_on\\_colour\\_use\\_screen.pdf](http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/guidance_on_colour_use_screen.pdf)

The Three Counties Agricultural Society has commissioned a developed palette of colours for use in future development at the showground.

#### Development Management

The Unit objected to an application for the development of new housing at Cradley. Herefordshire Council has refused the application. This may be appealed and if so is likely to end in a PI.

#### Stonebank

One of Malvern's signature building stones is the rock of the hills. Aware that much of this was going to landfill when buildings or walls were knocked down, and that stone-wallers often couldn't find stone to repair the structures; the AONB unit has rented a space on which to store stone until it's needed. The site is now operational and anyone with unwanted Malvern stone should contact David Armitage.

#### **Photo competition**

The AONB Unit's photo competition closed at the end of August 2016. Prizes have been awarded and a number of entries are on display in Exhibition Walk in Malvern. For further information see:

<http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/photography-competition-2016/>

## **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

Email: [worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:worcestershirehub@worcestershire.gov.uk)

### Specific Contact Points for this report

Paul Esrich, Manager, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership

Tel: 01684 560616

Email: [pesrich@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:pesrich@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Website: [www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk](http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk)