



Agenda

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Friday, 6 November 2020, 10.00 am

Online only

A Zoom invite will be sent to Committee Members prior to the meeting.

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Worcestershire County Council will be holding this meeting in accordance with the relevant legislative arrangements for remote meetings of a local authority. For more information please refer to: Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Please note that this is a public meeting, conducting remotely by videoconferencing between invited participants and live streamed for general access via a link on the Council's website to the Council's You Tube Channel. The Agenda papers and background papers can be accessed electronically on the Council's website. Members of the public and press are permitted to report on the proceedings.

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Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Friday, 6 November 2020, 10.00 am, Online only

Members

Elected Members:

Mrs G Rees (Chairman)	Malvern Hills Conservators
Dr K A Pollock (Vice Chairman)	Worcestershire County 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
Prof J W Raine	Malvern Hills District 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

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

Agenda produced and published by the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance, 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

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

Date of Issue: Thursday, 22 October 2020

Item No	Subject	Page No
4	To Appoint a Vice-Chairman	
5	Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2019.	
6	The History and Heritage of Barton Court To receive a short video presentation from George Demidowicz, a local Landscape Historian.	
7	A Prospectus for the English AONBs To receive a report from Paul Esrich (AONB Partnership manager) on the recently produced prospectus. To note the contents of the prospectus and to provide any relevant comments.	1 - 20
8	AONB Budget and Work Programme 2020/21 To receive a report from Paul Esrich, AONB Partnership Manager.	21 - 34
9	Planning Matters and the Malvern Hills AONB To receive a report from Karen Humphries (AONB Partnership Assistant Manager) and to raise and discuss any matters arising.	35 - 44
10	A Nature Recovery Plan for the Malvern Hills AONB To receive a report from Paul Esrich (AONB Partnership Manager) and to raise and discuss any issues arising.	45 - 50
11	Sustainable Development Fund To receive a report from David Armitage, AONB Partnership Assistant Manager.	51 - 52
12	Information Items To note the items for information.	53 - 56
13	Verbal Reports from Partners	
14	Dates of Future Meetings Dates 2021 Friday 23 April 2021 Friday 5 November 2021	
	If you have any other contributions that you would like to bring to the meeting, please contact Paul Esrich tel: 01905 845057.	

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 6 NOVEMBER 2020

A PROSPECTUS FOR THE ENGLISH AONBS

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the content of this national prospectus;**
- b) Provide any comments.**

Background

1. We await a response from Government to the National Landscapes Review, published in September 2019. However, over recent weeks and months the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has been working closely with Defra to help officials make a case to Treasury for increased funding to AONB partnerships/conservation boards. Treasury's priorities are currently dictated by measures to support economic recovery and EU transition so there is no easy case to make for designated landscapes, especially with so little money available outside of these areas.
2. However, the NAAONB believes that there remains a great deal of political interest in a National Landscape Service. This was a key recommendation in the National Landscapes Review – a national body to bring together the 44 disparate National Parks and AONBs and to deliver for nature across boundaries, driving ambitious action and holding them to account. The Association remains close to these and other conversations in government.
3. With very little notice the NAAONB was asked to provide supporting information to help Defra make a case to Treasury in this spending review. The PDF Prospectus for AONBs (attached) is the result. This has been very well received by officials and forms part of Defra's draft submission. The Association has offered to be on standby to supply data, evidence, and case studies to help Defra make its case prior to the final submission to Treasury.
4. The Prospectus is just one example of the sort of work being carried out by the National Association to keep AONBs and what they can offer in the purview of government. It encapsulates the ambition that the AONB network has for these areas in the future.
5. *Please note that the prospectus is a working document intended to help Defra officials and is not to be published.*

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Prospectus for the AONB Network **An Offer to the Nation**



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Introduction

This prospectus has been designed to support Defra during this spending review and will not be formally published. It is set within the context of the current coronavirus pandemic and seeks to build on the important role that AONB partnerships and conservation boards can play in supporting economic and social recovery. It is also designed to support delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan and responds in part to the recommendations of the Glover Review. It represents a collation of offers from the AONB network, some of which may be communicated separately.

The NAAONB welcomes the recommendations of the Glover Review, recognising it as the most thorough and insightful, evidence led appraisal of the AONB designation in a generation.

Julian Glover's recommendation that funding to AONBs be doubled immediately was, of course, welcomed by the AONB network, but we understand current constraints – this is why every costing in this prospectus is related directly to challenge funding and specific current government priorities. It is worth noting that funding for AONB teams in 2005/6 was £11,054,571. In 2019/20, the figure was £6,807,451, representing a real-term reduction in budget of 60%. However, agile AONB teams have continued to demonstrate their ingenuity and versatility, leveraging non-exchequer funding and creating partnerships that deliver projects which make a genuine difference to the lives of people and nature.

This spending round provides an opportunity to address the statement made by the Glover Review panel that 'the national zeal of the founding mission for landscape protection has been eroded'. We agree with this assertion and consequently every part of our offer is designed to support the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and and make sure that AONBs can be enjoyed more equitably, used by and cared for by everyone.

Additionally, our collective response to the recovery phase of the coronavirus pandemic is critical. We must generate momentum and align our activity to ensure that the recovery is genuinely green. Our contribution to economic recovery must support the delivery of our purposes and

- Reduce the impact of climate change
- Support nature recovery
- Promote more sustainable patterns of consumption and production

This will involve driving long term changes in behaviours.

The AONB network is ready and willing to progress these agendas, delivering not just for current generations, but for those in the future. We cannot do this, however, without an investment of resources. This is the time to strengthen the AONB designation with new purposes, powers and resources, and in doing so support them in the delivery of their offer to the nation. AONB teams have demonstrated time and again that they have delivered more with less, but with an average of four full time members of staff in each AONB team, we are now at full capacity. Defra funding for all AONBs is less than that for a single National Park, at less than 20p per taxpayer per year, yet we are geographically more accessible to a much wider section of the population. This is an enormous opportunity for government to deliver far more to society for a comparatively small investment.

Protecting and recovering nature

The Issues

There is a global ecological crisis. Society has a wide range of dependencies on nature and nature recovery is a global priority. There is public and Government expectation that our National Landscapes, as IUCN Category V Protected Areas, should be at the heart of nature recovery, with the Teams working closely with farmers, landowners, other partners and communities to protect what remains and recover what has been lost.

The AONB Teams have an outstanding track record of delivery on nature recovery, their capacity to draw in more resources and deliver even more ambitious programmes is hampered by extremely limited resources at their core. 'Shovel-ready projects' can only happen with the resources to do the spade-work that underpins them.

Flooding costs the UK £1.3bn per year, and the floods during winter 2015/16 cost £1.6bn alone.

Peat holds up to 20 times its own weight in water and 1,450 tonnes of carbon per hectare, helping flood management and carbon capture. AONB teams have restored 50,000 hectares of peat bog in areas across the UK since 2010.

The Offer

Taking forward the stretch targets of the Colchester Declaration (page 5) and the 25 Year Environment Plan through ambitious expansion of delivery for nature recovery in each AONB, working closely with the farming and landowning community, to arrest and reverse the decline in nature. We will make a significant contribution to increasing national tree cover and managing our woods better, restoring grasslands, peatlands, heathlands and wetlands and delivering AONB landscapes with greater connectivity and ecological integrity and where more and larger areas of land are better managed for nature. These more biodiverse landscapes, with regenerative agriculture at their core, will be more climate resilient, and more economically robust, delivering more for people and nature.

The Resources Required

Increased professional staff capacity in each AONB team, to engage with the farming and landowning community and with other partners to devise, develop and deliver landscape-scale programmes of nature recovery, to support locally agreed nature recovery plans, including raising additional resources to increase action and ambition. £5,100,000 pa.

A modest **fund to support delivery**, especially with individual landowners and communities. £2,040,000 pa.

The Outcomes

- Measurable impact towards arresting, and ultimately reversing, the decline of nature in AONBs and using them as a platform for national nature recovery.
- Conserving and enhancing natural beauty
- Increasing action to improve the environment from all sectors of society.
- Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our landscape and improving its environmental value, while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.
- Placing AONBs at the heart of developing a Nature Recovery Network.

The Colchester Declaration 2019

Set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world, and intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient – the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty believes that now is the time to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in AONBs. Using our unique network and partnership model, we are making a collective Declaration on Nature in AONBs, setting out our strategy for change.

With many AONB host authorities having taken the step of declaring a Climate Emergency we are demonstrating our readiness to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

We believe

1. Natural Beauty has intrinsic value and means so much to people
2. AONBs should be places of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife
3. Nature recovery is central to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
4. Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Designated landscapes offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change
5. The network of AONBs and National Parks, their teams, partnerships, authorities and stakeholders offer a unique solution to tackling environmental challenges

We pledge

By July 2020

1. To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature.
2. To prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB

By 2024

1. To embed an ecosystems services approach into all AONB Management Plans
2. To ensure all AONB management plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero

By 2030

1. That at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition
2. That at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/ restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals
3. That at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place
4. That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and by preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the list by 2030

We call on Westminster and Welsh Governments to provide the power and resources to make these targets achievable

Protecting and recovering nature – our track record



Common terns are on the UK Amber list, showing a general decline in population in recent years. Terns in Chichester Harbour have a very limited number of sites on which to breed, and those sites are often threatened by tidal flooding, predation or human disturbance; all 2017 nesting attempts failed.

To address this, in 2018 Chichester Harbour Conservancy AONB team installed a series of tern rafts, which were being used by terns within three days of being floated, giving terns a safe place to breed.

Eels have been at the core of the River Glaven ecology and local culture for hundreds of years but have suffered a steep decline in numbers. The Norfolk Coast AONB project increased scientific knowledge about the critically-endangered species, improved eel habitat and re-connected current generations with the eel, its folklore and traditions, and with the few remaining eel catchers, who made their living from the eel - before these connections are lost forever.



[Click to see the short film](#)

The North Pennines AONB has 40% of all the UK's species rich upland hay meadows. The Haytime and Nectarworks projects have seen 1120 upland hay meadows surveyed, leading to almost 300 management agreements with farmers and almost 400 hectares of habitat restoration. A Nectar Source Network Map has been produced and a successor project worked with hundreds of volunteers planting and managing key sites and creating nectar gardens in schools and care homes. Almost 2000 children were engaged in educational programmes focused on flora and pollinator art, fun and discovery. This work more than doubled the resource of species rich-hay meadow in the AONB and made a national-scale contribution to this Biodiversity Action Plan habitat.



[Click for more information on just 70 of the Nature Recovery Solutions AONBs we have delivered](#)

Safeguarding and enhancing landscapes

The Issues

The AONB Family shares the Government's ambition to help the natural world regain and maintain good health. In AONBs, and arguably elsewhere, it is important that measures to support sustainable farming are aligned with the need to conserve and enhance natural beauty. We are currently trialling new approaches to this alignment whilst, at the same time, delivering across all the goals and policies in the 25 YEP. We are testing new ways of working with land managers that will put the environment first and fully utilise the opportunities afforded by the AONB designation to deliver integrated, place-based solutions. There is a clear, emerging need for AONB convenors to align the work of farm advisors with the objectives to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the landscape.

AONBs need a stronger voice in planning. The pressures on AONBs are often greater than National Parks, especially in the south east, and their voice is not always heard. The Glover Review recommended, therefore, that AONBs are given greater status in the planning system. They should become statutory consultees, and we set out later how we think this can work. They should also, where appropriate, be supported to work towards local plans for their areas, prepared in conjunction with local authorities.

AONB partnerships and conservation boards have universal interests in their localities, so are ideally placed to ensure that health and wellbeing interests, the private sector, cultural and heritage organisations and economic partnerships can get the most from an improved environment and can participate fully in both its conservation and enhancement. AONBs are a key national asset that can unlock these opportunities and realise the Government's high ambitions for the future.

The Offer

The Environmental Land Management scheme

AONBs are already working with Defra and other stakeholders to progress 'Farming for the Nation'. More information is available on our [website](#).

The NAAONB is coordinating an ELM Test and Trial across 12 AONBs, looking at how the scheme might work in a wide range of settings including, vineyards in the Kent Downs, collaboration between small-scale farms in Devon, and High Nature Value Farming in the Northern Uplands.

AONBs are working with farmers and land managers to identify key elements of a successful ELM scheme, building on existing strong relationships with local communities.

The trial is defining how to effectively connect with farmers and land owners/farmers to promote ELMs, how AONB Management Plans can be used in the production of farm-scale ELM Land Management Plans, and how through the use of "convenors" activity is integrated to deliver landscape-scale priorities

Safeguarding and enhancing landscapes

The Offer

The Environmental Land Management scheme (cont)

The AONB network is ready and able to support **nationwide advocacy** across all National Landscapes: National Landscapes are intimately linked with farmers and land managers and are well positioned to spread the word about ELMs and thereby increase engagement. Working collaboratively, there is huge potential to work with farmers to engage them in ELMs, and then provide support and information during the pilot phase and beyond. The NAAONB has bid for £171k to establish programmes in this financial year. Additional funding could allow continuation throughout the ELMs pilot phase, moving from engagement into advice and guidance.

The Tests and Trials process has highlighted the need to develop spatial prioritisation in National Landscapes. Currently, the direction of travel is to develop “spatial” plans from scratch using County Council geographies. This proposed plan process has direct parallels to development of AONB Management Plans. The proposals present two major concerns to National Landscapes and contradict the Landscape Review. Those concerns are:

- a. Using a county council geographies will undermine the coherence of a landscape approach in National Landscape.
- b. There will be an unnecessary duplication of effort.

The solution is to use the existing AONB Management Planning process and plans to develop farm-scale ELMs plans.

It is becoming clear from the Tests and Trials that there will potentially be a plethora of farm advisors working throughout National Landscapes. Their advice will vary and may not always be aligned with the policies and approaches set out in AONB ELMs management plans. The NAAONB suggests that there is a need for **convenors in AONBs**. There will be a need for AONB convenors to align the work of farm advisors with the objectives to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the landscape.

A National Landscape Service

The Landscapes Review recommended that “we need a new National Landscapes Service to drive ambition, collaboration and delivery”, and in coming to this, and other, conclusions regularly remarked on how the culture of the AONB network differed, in a positive way, from that of the National Parks.

The National Association for AONBs is justifiably proud of the role it has played in promoting and supporting collaboration across the AONB network. It is equally proud of the energy, commitment, skills, and experience that AONB staff have applied to making it come to life. The collective impact has been inspirational and impactful.

Safeguarding and enhancing landscapes

The Offer

A National Landscape Service (cont)

We are, however, just part of the complex system that has formed around the delivery of the AONB purpose. Consultants, contractors, civil servants, politicians, NGOs, corporate business, grant funding bodies, and the public have all been instrumental in working with us to achieve our objectives. We have worked collectively to recruit many others to the cause.

A recommendation to improve collaboration across a complex network is straightforward. Making it happen, less so. A simple answer to a complex challenge is invariably wrong.

In designing a new National Landscape Service these issues of complexity, culture, and systems thinking should be considered. The NAAONB is keen to **continue working with Defra** on developing the best possible outcome and asks that Defra maintains an open and transparent dialogue with stakeholders to this effect.

The NAAONB has already put considerable effort into supporting the national conversation in this area, providing professional advice, opinion, technical insight, and evidence, and intends to continue to play a key part in this discussion. The NAAONB will support further discussion across the AONB network, and work with stakeholders to help ensure that the AONB network receives the national delivery service it requires to flourish in line with the aspirations of the Review.

Supporting a strengthening of the Duty of Regard

The Duty of Regard is a central pillar in the delivery of the AONB purpose(s). The NAAONB has long advocated for a strengthening of the Duty of Regard defined under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 by becoming a Duty of Due Regard. This was echoed in the recommendations of the Glover Review.

Over the course of the Glover Review of AONBs and National Parks, the NAAONB and National Parks England have been in regular communication. Effort has been made to agree on the most effective way to improve protection to designated landscapes and articulate this as one united voice. The issue of both the duty of Regard and the duty of Due Regard have been considered by both parties in detail.

The NAAONB therefore concludes that **s.85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act should be amended** to include reference to 'special regard' and 'furthering the purpose of designation'. This would ensure that any relevant authority would, in its decision making, have to give greater importance and weight to the furthering of the AONB purposes.

Safeguarding and enhancing landscapes

The Offer

Statutory Consultee Status

Statutory consultee status would speed up the planning process within AONBs. AONB teams could provide detailed advice to developers, local authorities, and other stakeholders ensuring that best use is made of the AONB management plan and its underpinning democratic principles. Statutory consultees status would also reduce the risk of conflicting opinion and the need for public inquiries. Local Authorities could also be reassured that their duty of regard to the AONB purpose is expedited, reducing potential tension between AONB partnerships, local authorities, and wider stakeholders.

Statutory consultee status would be welcomed by many AONBs. Whilst the level of resource required to deliver this function is dependent the kinds of applications that would be covered by statutory consultee status, the magnitude of development pressure, and the role of Natural England, our estimated costs are realistic.

The Resources Required

The Environmental Land Management Scheme

To continue nationwide advocacy across all National Landscapes for the pilot phase will cost £2.7 m over 3 years (21/22 – 23/24). This equates to £20k per National Landscape plus £20k national coordination per year.

To undertake the additional work to fine-tune AONB Management Plan to be fit for purpose at the farm-scale would cost on average £25k per AONB equating to £850k in total.

An ELMs Convenor in each AONB, to align advice with policy, coordinate farm advisors and review delivery of ELMs against national and local objectives. Cost £1.36m per annum.

Statutory Consultee Status

Experienced planning staff capacity in each relevant AONB team, to manage caseload, support public inquiries, and progress, where appropriate, the design, consultation, and publication of the AONB Development Plan.

£1,400,000 in year one, followed by £1,250,000 annually thereafter.

The Outcomes

- Conserving and enhancing natural beauty
- Measurable impact on protecting and recovering nature
- Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our landscapes and improving their environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing

The Issues

All AONBs are within half an hour travel time of large towns and cities, so AONBs are perfectly located to support their local communities, yet for some people access is an issue – either the practicalities of visiting the countryside or feeling welcome and/or confident are barriers.

The Glover Review recognised what we instinctively know – that designated landscapes are the preserve of white, middle aged, middle class people and AONBs are actively seeking to expand this audience to fully represent the variety of citizens in the UK today.

The legislation that paved the way for the designation of AONBs was sister legislation to that which set up the NHS – AONBs were conceived as spaces for people to seek exercise and care for their mental and spiritual health, while the NHS was there to care for them if they became sick. We have seen more than ever during the Covid pandemic that people need green and blue spaces to stay healthy and we know that people have found renewed solace in nature through this time of national hardship.

We have commissioned the University of Winchester to carry out a literature review on the barriers to accessing green and blue spaces faced by people from ethnic minority backgrounds, those from deprived areas, people with chronic conditions and people from LGBTQ+ groups. We would like to be able to explore this more with a full research project incorporating household surveys with our 'Missing People'.

The Offer

AONBs have a strong track record of engaging with people. In 2018/19 alone AONBs engaged with half a million people.

With more specialist community engagement staff and improved transport, AONBs could make a significant impact on the health and wellbeing and educational outcomes of their local areas and nearby urban centres.

AONB teams have expertise in:

- providing volunteering opportunities which bring physical and mental health benefits to attendees as well as providing work experience and maximising the conservation work we are able to deliver on the ground. All AONBs have volunteer programmes, some engaging as many as 250 people on a regular basis,
- engaging with local healthcare providers to create social prescribing or self referral opportunities
- supporting people living with dementia and their carers, through dementia friendly walks programmes and art sessions,
- creating self-guided walks of varying distances and levels of difficulty, many accessible from public transport links and some specially created for people with mobility issues,

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing

The Offer (cont)

AONB teams have expertise in:

- supporting visits by people from ethnic minority and refugee backgrounds through events, guided walks and the provision of signposting for independent visits.
- work with schools, one AONB's education service engaged 8000 school children in onsite visits during 2018/19 alone, other AONBs specifically target those schools with high pupil premium rates (over 50%) in their nearby urban settings,
- working with artists on projects to attract and engage new audiences, these range from large scale installations to projects with school children inspired by landscape,
- piloting 'A Night Under the Stars for every schoolchild' as recommended in the Glover Review.

The Resources Required

For a minority of AONBs, working with their nearby communities is an aspiration due to lack of resources, for many others it has been a bolt-on to an existing member of staff's responsibilities. We can demonstrate the benefits of people accessing green and blue spaces, and we can demonstrate how these benefits are maximised when specialist members of staff are employed. Where resources can be found to employ specialist community officers, these are multiplied in some cases by an order of magnitude due to the grant funding these officers are able to secure. This would enable us to develop closer relationships with community groups to improve community cohesion, increase our social prescribing offer to improve health outcomes and reduce costs to the local NHS and build relationships with local schools to improve educational outcomes.

An expansion of the pilot scheme for the Night under the Stars for every schoolchild to build this into a 'tried and true' funding package to take to local grant providers will enable us to collaborate and develop a model that can be flexed to work in most areas of England.

£500,000 per year for twenty new community officer posts.

£500,000 for an expansion of the Night Under the Stars pilot scheme, more comprehensive research targeting underserved groups specifically to better understand the barriers to accessing the countryside and a project to boost social prescribing provision within AONBs.

The Outcomes

- Conserving and enhancing natural beauty
- Helping people improve their health and wellbeing by using green spaces
- Helping children and young people from all backgrounds to engage with nature and improve the environment
- Increasing action to improve the environment from all sectors of society.
- Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our landscapes and improving its environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing – case study

The Forest of Bowland AONB Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership

Forest of Bowland AONB has demonstrated the clear benefits of recruiting Jayne Ashe, a project officer focussed on community engagement, to create new opportunities for engaging individuals and local groups from under-served communities as part of the AONB's Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership Project. By 'under-served' we mean those sectors of the community who we as landscape professionals need to do more to engage with and welcome into the countryside. (see blog by Dr Anjana Khatwa, <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/black-and-brown-faces-green-spaces>)

The Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership is a four year project designed to conserve this landmark hill, re-connect people with the nature and rich history on their doorstep, and to bring together the two contrasting sides of the hill.

Pendle Hill has always been an iconic sight, dominating the East Lancashire landscape, and is within easy travelling distance of the former mill towns of Nelson, Colne and Burnley on the south side, and the rural towns and villages of Downham, Clitheroe and Sawley in the north.

Broadly, the former mill towns are home to working class communities and large South Asian communities; while the towns and villages in the north are mainly home to white people, some of whom commute into the closest cities of Manchester and Leeds. However, this diversity in the local population is not always reflected in the mix of people who visit and benefit from the countryside around Pendle Hill: missing, and therefore target audiences for the LPS to encourage are the young, BAME and people dealing with mental health and social isolation.

The stories associated with Pendle Hill are a key starting point for engagement. The most well known historical link to the hill is that of the Pendle witches, a group of (mainly) women accused of witchcraft and tried at Lancaster Castle in 1612, but there is more to the hill. In 1652 George Fox had the vision that drove him to set up the Quaker movement – a moment that links directly to the drafting of the constitution of the US. This is not the only example of radical thinking that links directly to the hill – Selina Cooper, a hero of the suffrage movement lived in the shadow of the hill, as did numerous dissenters and reforming socialists, and Tom Stephenson, architect of the Pennine Way came from one of the surrounding villages. The area has a lot to be proud of, but communities have suffered from multiple deprivation as mills began to close from the 1960s.

The team at Forest of Bowland AONB have worked with and alongside existing community organisations to reach more and a wider variety of people.

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing – case study



Working with organisations which had already built trusted relationships with the South Asian (largely Pakistani) community has meant that events designed as stepping stones to get families out into the countryside take account of any cultural aspects which the AONB team may not have been aware of. Some families were already regular visitors to the hill, but many have not been able to venture into their local countryside. Creating a series of fun events, sometimes with transport provided meant that families could start building their own relationship with the green spaces nearby, gaining confidence from which to begin visiting independently.

Additionally, Jayne created links with a local mental health and social inclusion service, enabling people to be referred or to self-refer to the People Enjoying Nature programme. The people accessing the programme faced mental health challenges including depression, anxiety and agoraphobia. Getting outdoors in a no-pressure environment gave them the opportunity to engage as much or as little as they wanted, but attendees said they felt huge benefits of being outdoors, carrying out meaningful work and building friendships with other attendees. For the People Enjoying Nature Programme, Jayne runs weekly activities including conservation work such as brash clearance on the hill, and art activities – painting pebbles for a children's trail. As there is very little public transport provision in the area and very few attendees have their own cars, a minibus was commissioned to collect people from central points and bring them onsite.

Volunteering opportunities have also delivered benefits for people and the landscape. A variety of volunteering opportunities are available, from physical outdoor work carrying out footpath maintenance and helping with peat restoration work; to researching local history and archaeology or planning local walking routes. Volunteering opportunities are advertised through the normal AONB routes, but they team also run an initiative for existing local community organisations to 'Get Into Volunteering' as a group. Existing activity and support groups such as Young Carers, Police Cadets, Princes Trust, inter-faith projects, women's and family support groups have engaged with the AONB and Landscape Partnership Scheme in this way. The overall aim is to increase the number of volunteers from all backgrounds, and the benefits to mental and physical health as well as the sense of pride in the local area are enormous.

Photos: 1. Peat Engagement Day, 2. Get Into Volunteering, 3. Meet you at the top. Groups from either side of the hill at the Landscape Partnership launch event, preparing to hike up the hill.

Strengthening Economic Recovery

The Issues

The likely trajectory of the economic and social impact of the Covid pandemic is becoming clearer. Unemployment, mental ill health, economic decline with particular impact on rural and coastal areas is already hitting home.

The Government is committed to a green recovery and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) stand ready to support this. AONBs have an important role to play in supporting a fair and equitable recovery as they are in predominantly rural areas, but often close to large centres of population. A significant proportion of the UK's rural coastline is covered by the AONB designation; areas that have already experienced disproportionate economic and social impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Offer

AONB Green Recovery Fund

Establish an AONB Green Recovery Fund; in terms of practical delivery at pace, we see an immediate opportunity to re-ignite and expand the 'Sustainable Development Fund' (SDF) which has been successfully delivered across the National Landscapes for many years.

The AONB Green Recovery Fund would be a light touch delegated grant, driven by the agreed priorities of the statutory AONB Management Plans, nature and carbon targets and the need for economic and social recovery in and beyond the AONBs. The approach is driven by community engagement (most grant panels were delivered in collaboration with the community representative) and is willing to take a managed risk to secure green recovery investments amongst rural business (for example food and visitor sector), public bodies and charities.

The Sustainable Development Fund model, on which we aim to build, is an acknowledged success, typically securing significant match funding in cash and effort from partner organisations and subject to rapid delivery. Many of the AONB teams and partnerships have been partners or have run LEADER rural development schemes and, in re-igniting the SDF, we would draw lessons from these schemes but not repeat the administrative burden.

The National Landscapes have an existing management and delivery system for the SDF and so the AONB Green Recovery Fund could be either re-established or geared up quickly. If funding confirmation were given this financial year, we could start generating schemes this year and deliver in year or in 21/22 and in subsequent years

Strengthening Economic Recovery

The Offer

Create 1000 new jobs

The Glover Review proposed 1000 new rangers for the English AONBs and National Parks. We welcome this proposal and are in a position, across the country, to start recruitment for new staff to deliver a green recovery on the ground service. Our aim would be to include rural business support, nature connection and mental health, diversity and inclusion, farmer and land management support, nature recovery and support for the critical visitor economy.

AONB teams have experience of creating **traineeships and apprenticeships** and, given the likely impact of Covid-19, this would be a focus of recovery - particularly in new traineeships in nature-based jobs. Apprentices would receive additional training support from existing Apprenticeship Levy funds, strengthening the skillset in the green sector.

Assuming the recommendations above are supported, the AONB teams would increase the number of traineeships and apprentices.

The Resources Required

Green Recovery Fund

Our initial proposal would be to seek £100K funding per AONB initially, plus £10K towards scheme management, monitoring and reporting. The grant can be geared up over subsequent years. We suggest making the grant available to spend across financial years which would greatly improve its effectiveness and makes sense given the current substantial uncertainties for all sectors.

Create 1000 new jobs

Scope, define and begin the programme of recruiting the 1000 new staff for AONBs and National Parks allowing local determination of the appropriate roles to support the visitor economy, health and well-being, diversity and inclusion, nature recovery and climate emergency. Scope/workforce plan agreed in 2020/21 - £60,000 and 100 new staff in AONBs recruited in 2021/22 - £1,200,000 per annum.

The Outcomes

- Conserving and enhancing natural beauty

Summary

As the nation recovers from the Covid pandemic and its effects on individuals and the economy, and the government remains committed to a green recovery, England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are able to offer ideal solutions to many government priorities.

Furloughed workers, families and staycationers have had the opportunity to rediscover the natural beauty around them and the incredible effect it has on their wellbeing, even in challenging times.

But more than this, AONBs are places of innovation. They are the bustling factory floor of the UK food industry as well as places where conservation brings research science to life.

AONB teams have a proven track record of delivery, and maximising their funding through collaborative partnership working, leveraging of non-exchequer funding and the development of strong volunteer groups which benefit attendees and the landscape.

From 'public money for public goods' farming solutions that work in every landscape type, to social prescribing targeting key health and wellbeing issues such as obesity and mental ill health; from meaningful social inclusion work to climate solutions to counter the annual multi-billion pound cost to the nation of flooding and soil erosion; AONBs are the answer on the nation's doorsteps.

We are now working at full capacity. A comparatively modest investment of resources would enable AONB teams to quickly ramp up their work and deliver more of government's priorities for the wellbeing of nature, people and all our futures.

Summary

Headline Offer	Activity	Year one investment	Annual resource requirement
Protecting and Recovering Nature	Taking forward the Colchester Declaration	£5,100,000	£5,100,000
	Supporting delivery	£2,040,000	£2,040,000
Safeguarding and enhancing landscapes	Statutory consultee status for AONB partnerships/conservation boards	£1,400,000	£1,250,000
	ELM nationwide advocacy programme	£900,000	£900,000
	ELM convenors	£1,360,000	£1,360,000
	AONB management plan fine-tune	£850,000	-
Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing	Recruitment and retention of twenty community engagement officers	£500,000	£500,000
	Expansion of Night Under the Stars project, research into underserved groups, expansion of social prescribing	£500,000	£400,000
Strengthening Economic Recovery	Green Recovery Fund	£3,740,000	£3,740,000
	Create 1000 jobs	£60,000	£1,200,000
	Totals	£16,450,000	£16,490,000

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 6 NOVEMBER 2020

AONB BUDGET AND WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the budget for 2020/21; and**
- b) Comment on the overall direction and work priorities for the year ahead.**

Background

1. A grant application to support the core work of the AONB Partnership in 2020/21 was considered by members of the Steering Group before being submitted to Defra in March 2020.

Summary

2. A summary of the core budget and key work tasks for the year is provided in Appendix 1 and 3 respectively. The latter incorporates a priority rating informed by Covid-19. Anticipated budget figures from previous years are provided in brackets for comparison. The main points to note are as follows.

Budget

3. The total budget for 2020/21 is £193,387 (£191,298). The increase is the result of a real terms protection in funding to AONB Partnerships from Central Government for the current financial year. No indication has yet been provided about future funding contributions.
4. Of the total, £181,197 (£168,423) can be identified as 'core' funding with £12,190 (£22,875) allocated to the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). £10,000 has been set aside for biodiversity related work, reflecting a request made by Defra in its offer letter. 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 (£149,224). 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

5. 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 2015/16. 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

6. Salaries have risen by 2.75% for staff of Worcestershire County Council.

Work Priorities

7. the Unit's work programme for 2020/21 is centred around the implementation of the new AONB Management Plan.

Project Funding

8. External funding linked to the Natural Networks grant programme (Worcestershire only) and Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund will also be forthcoming.

County Council Contact Points

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Appendix 1 –Budget for Malvern Hills AONB Partnership in 2020/21

Element	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14
Staff (costs inc. salary, NI, super, training, travel, NI, <i>backfunding pensions</i> etc)								
AONB Manager	£58,941	£57,399	£52,160	£52,410	£52,405	£51,910	£50,400	£50,500
AONB Assistant Manager	£44,518	£43,500	£39,510	£39,600	£39,500	£39,300	£38,220	£38,320
AONB Support Officer	£18,949	£18,202	£15,650	£15,770	£15,770	£15,570	£15,160	£14,960
Strategy Officer/Planning Advice Project Officer	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	£7,000	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000
							£3,669	
<i>Sub total</i>	<i>£130,408</i>	<i>£127,101</i>	<i>£115,320</i>	<i>£114,780</i>	<i>£115,675</i>	<i>£114,780</i>	<i>£115,449</i>	<i>£111,780</i>
Accommodation/office equipment	£9,072	£9,072	£9,072	£8,742	£8,742	£8,742	£8,242	£8,242
Partnership budget for PR, events etc.								
NAAONB membership	£3,000	£2,575	£2,575	£2,400	£2,400			
Annual review	£400	£358	£400	£400	£400			
Small grants scheme for landscape and biodiversity improvements	£10,000	£4,000	£3,000	£3,600	£3,600			
Landscape scale project development	£4,580	£4,580	£3,000	£3,500	£3,500			
External advice	£3,500	£3,500	£1,500					
State of AONB report			£5,000					
Management Plan review			£9,000					
Large projects	£10,000	£5,000	£5,000	£6,980	£4,380			
Communications	£5,000	£3,000	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000			
<i>Sub total</i>	<i>£32,480</i>	<i>£23,013</i>	<i>£31,475</i>	<i>£24,880</i>	<i>£22,280</i>	<i>£22,280</i>	<i>£22,111</i>	<i>£27,236</i>
Partnership running costs (Council support, IT, personnel, finance etc.)	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237
Sustainable Development Fund	£12,190	£22,875	£22,872	£25,991	£25,502	£24,000	£24,000	£34,807
Total Budget	<u>£193,387</u>	<u>£191,298</u>	<u>£187,976</u>	<u>£183,875</u>	<u>£181,436</u>	<u>£179,039</u>	<u>£179,039</u>	<u>£191,302</u>

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Appendix 2 – Voluntary contributions from Parish/Town Councils

Organisation	Contribution				
	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16
Colwall PC	£1,500	£750	£750	£750	
Cradley PC	£100	£100	£100	£100	£200
Ledbury TC	£500	£500			
Malvern Wells PC	£760	£1,600	£1,600	£1,600	£800
Little Malvern & Welland PC	£300	£250	£250	£250	£250
West Malvern PC	£300	£300	£300	£300	£300
Wellington Heath PC	£100				£500
Berrow PC		£50			
Total	£3,560	£3,550	£3,000	£3,000	£2,050

Appendix 3 – Unit Work Programme for 2020/21

Management Plan Policy	Task	Covid adjusted priority (H, M, L)
Landscape		
LP1 Manage the landscape of the AONB in accordance with key documents such as the AONB Landscape Strategy, Landscape Character Assessments, Historic Landscape Characterisations and other guidance documents.	Ensure that comments on planning responses incorporate wider landscape issues.	H
LP2 Restore distinctive landscapes and landscape features that have been significantly degraded.	Work with the Three Counties Agricultural Society to develop a Master plan for the showground (brought forward from previous year)	L
LP3 Promote positive landscape change to landowners, managers, developers, government and all those with an influence over land.	Support a range of landowners with advice and help with funding support (including through the CSFF).	H
LP4 Ensure that climate change adaptation and mitigation proposals are consistent with the special qualities of the AONB and minimise any adverse effects on the area.	Work with one landowner to explore whether estate buildings can be powered by local wood fuel.	M
Illustrative Actions		
Promote greater awareness and appreciation of the landscape character of the AONB among residents and visitors, providing opportunities for them to be involved in identifying and conserving locally distinctive features, views and landscapes.		
Undertake surveys and research to better understand and monitor the condition, and rate of change, of landscape character.	Subject to discussions with University of Worcester	H
Identify appropriate climate change mitigation works, such as new habitat creation, within the AONB and its setting.	Research Woodland Carbon Guarantee Scheme and devise a woodland creation plan for land adjacent to Lake House (Malvern Wells) - if landowner is amenable	M
Geodiversity		
GP1 Secure best practice in geodiversity management within and adjacent to designated sites.		
GP2 Conserve the geodiversity	Support and resource H&WEHT	M

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resource in line with Geodiversity Action Plans.	volunteers in managing x Local Geological Sites (LGS)	
GP3 Ensure that landowners refer to site management plans before undertaking work on LGSs.		
GP4 Promote greater understanding of the geological value of the AONB, its links with the historic environment and the need for its protection and management.		
Illustrative Actions		
Undertake survey, research and monitoring to secure complete information on the state of the AONB's geodiversity resource, including recording temporary exposures before reburying.		
Seek to continue the LGS management programme using local volunteers.		
Biodiversity		
BP1 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.	Liaise with key partners to develop a Nature Recovery Strategy for the AONB – properly interfacing with one for the surrounding counties.	H
BP2 Conserve, enhance and expand key habitats and populations of key species in line with local biodiversity priorities and the England Biodiversity Strategy.	Work with partners to apply for at least 1 grant within the Worcestershire Natural Networks programme. Support the recovery of one key species in the AONB (as part of the Colchester Declaration)	H
BP3 In exercising development control decisions, secure developer contributions to enhance the natural environment.	Explore this in relation to the Ledbury viaduct site	H
BP4 Improve knowledge and understanding of the AONB's biodiversity, to guide management and to enable evaluation of the effectiveness of policies and actions.	Collect new data on rare species to inform landscape scale and species conservation in the AONB. Work with a dedicated volunteer to achieve this. Explore funding for a 'Finding Rare Species' project in the Herefordshire part of the AONB.	H M
BP5 Safeguard biodiversity from potential damaging impacts arising from development or other activities.		

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Illustrative actions		
Undertake survey and research to provide decision-makers with accurate and appropriate data.		
Restore the condition of degraded habitats in line with local and national biodiversity priorities.		
Historic Environment		
HP1 Conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment of the AONB in accordance with key documents such as Historic Landscape Characterisations, Conservation Area Appraisals, national and locally developed advice and guidance.		
HP2 Ensure the sustainable use of historic buildings and other heritage assets, particularly those identified as being at risk.		
HP3 Promote greater public understanding of, and engagement with, the historic environment of the AONB.	Support a research project on the use of flint in the area.	L
Illustrative actions		
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.	Support one Parish Council to submit proposals for listing of locally important heritage assets (in Worcestershire part of AONB)	H
Prepare and review appropriate management documents for key heritage assets to improve future conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.		
Farming and Forestry		
FP1 Ensure that agricultural and forestry practices include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sustainable production of produce • 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 	Work with Severn Rivers Trust and other partners to help secure effective water management	M
FP2 Bring woodlands, orchards and other characteristic habitats into favourable conservation condition through encouraging and supporting management regimes that provide	Support second phase of woodland planting at Mathon Court and woodland management at Slatch Coppice	H

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an economic return.		
FP3 Ensure that all new woodland planting in the AONB is largely of native species; no more than 20% being non-native species.		
FP4 Create native woodland in appropriate locations.	Explore opportunities for planting linked to the Woodland Carbon Guarantee Scheme	H
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.	Support for Signal Crayfish monitoring and eradication in Suckley Brook	M
FP6 Encourage the take-up of options and management practices that benefit the natural and cultural capital of the AONB.	Deliver final year of the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund west of the Malvern Hills. Work with NE and others to ensure that new CS grants benefit x owners in the AONB.	M
FP7 Promote local and seasonal produce and support the development of local services and markets.		
FP8 Maintain and develop the skills required to manage the landscape and its special qualities.		
Illustrative actions		
Identify the natural and cultural capital and ecosystem services to be key components of future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms in the AONB.	Promote Bromesberrow NC assessment work and explore application elsewhere	H
Support business partners who develop relevant local provenance brands.		
Living and Working		
LWP1 Produce and adhere to community-led plans, strategies and statements (such as Neighbourhood Development Plans) that conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and encourage and maintain the vitality and diversity of rural community life.	Work with at least two Parish Councils to develop/complete Neighbourhood Development Plans in the AONB (including Settlement Boundary for Ledbury).	M
LWP2 Support community initiatives that promote the creation and management of key habitats, appropriate renewable energy schemes, energy efficiency, recycling, community transport and		

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community housing.		
LWP3 Seek new, inventive and sensitive solutions to the retention of local shops and provision of viable local services, for example, through the integration of local service delivery, and through the delivery of universal high-speed broadband and 5G mobile phone coverage.		
LWP4 Support the provision of a variety of housing that is appropriate to the character of the area and meets local community needs.	Participate in the review of the SWDP and Herefordshire Local Plan, including beefing up support for setting.	H
Illustrative actions		
Develop model housing policies for adoption in Neighbourhood Development Plans.		
Raise awareness of 'carbon footprint' issues and opportunities.	Promote use of Natural Capital toolkits in the review of local plans and wherever else is relevant.	H
Built Development		
BDP1 Allocations of land for development in the AONB and its setting should be informed by Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessments and/or Landscape and Visual (Impact) Assessments, as appropriate.	Influence the SWDP and Herefordshire Local Plan process to ensure adherence to this policy.	H
BDP2 Development in the AONB and its setting should be in accordance with good practice guidance including that produced by the AONB Partnership.	Promote AONB guidance and ensure that key views are recognised in relevant planning responses. Assemble and showcase good practice examples of development – on the AONB website	H
BDP3 Development in the AONB should be based on convincing evidence of local need. Priority should be given to the provision of affordable housing and enhancing local services.	Influence the SWDP process to ensure adherence to this policy.	H
BDP4 Development proposals that may affect land in the AONB, including those in its setting, should protect and/or enhance key views and landscape character. AONB guidance relating to views and development in views should be used where relevant.	Through planning activity ensure adherence to AONB guidance and Development Plans.	H
BDP5 Lighting schemes should be kept to a minimum and only installed where absolutely necessary. Light pollution should be avoided through	Use lighting guidance to ensure adherence through planning responses.	H

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adherence to good practice design and through practice, for example, dimming or turning lighting off wherever possible.		
BDP6 There should be a presumption against the loss of traditional orchards to development, or changes to other uses.		
BDP7 Equestrian development should proceed in accordance with best practice guidance, including the AONB Partnership guidance on keeping horses in the landscape.	Promote good practice guidance on keeping horses, in general and in relation to specific development proposals Identify and promote a good practice pilot site	M
BDP8 Appropriate scale renewable energy schemes should be encouraged where these support the management of core elements of the AONB landscape and/or where they do not negatively affect the distinctive attributes or special qualities of the AONB.		
BDP9 Farm-scale polytunnels for commercial use would not normally be an accepted form of development in the AONB. Where polytunnel development is proposed and where economic benefits are being weighed against landscape impact, priority will be afforded to protecting the natural beauty of AONBs. A whole farm approach should be taken to ensure an acceptable location, design and scale.		
BDP10 Support the recycling, re-use and limited and appropriate 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.	Continue to promote and support the Malvern Hills stone bank.	M
BDP11 The reuse and redevelopment of existing buildings should be supported, especially where this helps retain the distinctive character of the AONB.		
BDP12 A Master Plan will be developed for the Three Counties Showground. This should ensure that the site and any future development and landscaping is	Work with the TCAS to produce a Masterplan.	

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effectively integrated into the nationally designated landscape of the AONB.		
BDP13 The cumulative impact of small-scale change and development will be monitored. Data gathered will be used to inform decisions and to revise and/or develop policy.	Work with Colwall Parish Council to monitor hedge/stonewall replacement in the parish (carried forward from this year).	M
BDP14 In the setting of the AONB, Local Planning Authorities should consider identifying locally important landscape areas to conserve the special qualities and features of the AONB and their enjoyment by people.		
Illustrative actions		
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 distinctiveness of the area.		
Explore the use of the Natural Capital Planning Tool to assess development proposals for their likely impact on the AONB's Natural Capital and the ecosystem services it provides to people.		
Develop a model policy for locally important landscape designations in areas adjoining the AONB, to help safeguard important vistas and views to and from the AONB.		
Tourism		
TP1 Stimulate and support sustainable tourism practices in the AONB.	Reprint and distribute the revised AONB visitor map and guide (as required).	H
TP2 Provide a quality public realm with good access and accessibility to facilities and features that attract tourists.		
TP3 Develop more collaborative and joined-up working between public, private and voluntary sector tourism organisations across the AONB, enabling greater overall efficiency and use of resources.		
TP4 Ensure that the tourism sector recognises the benefits of conserving and enhancing the		

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special qualities of the AONB and reflects this in policy and practice.		
TP5 Work in partnership to develop the Malverns as an area for showcasing new tourism technologies.		
Illustrative action		
Raise awareness of the AONB and promote the AONB and adjoining areas as a sustainable destination in its own right.		
Transport and Accessibility		
TRP1 Highway management and design should be in accordance with the AONB Guidance on Highway Design.	Ensure that highways works in the AONB are in accordance with the design guidance.	H
TRP2 Promote sustainable transport to enhance tranquillity and minimise the impact of traffic on the AONB; encouraging a safer and more attractive environment for walking, cycling and horse riding.	Comment on individual planning applications that may see a significant or cumulative impact in traffic.	M
TRP3 Reuse and refurbish appropriate highway furniture and fittings to strengthen the special character of the AONB.		
TRP4 Coordinate the planning of integrated passenger transport to, from and within the AONB.		
TRP5 Introduce and maintain measures to reduce car movements in the AONB, particularly during major events and at peak times.		
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. Seek compensation for such effects where relevant.	Comment on individual planning applications that may see a significant or cumulative impact in traffic.	
TRP7 Develop and promote sustainable transport options to meet local accessibility requirements.	Work on Community Transport opportunities to allow more people (especially hard to reach groups) to access the AONB.	L
Illustrative actions		
Restore and maintain tranquillity in the AONB through traffic mitigation and reduction measures.		
Develop dedicated routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders within the AONB and between the AONB and surrounding areas.	Support WCC in attempts to create an appropriate Active Travel Corridor in Malvern Wells. Keep the heat on with Worc-	H

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	Malvern bike link.	
Recreation and Access		
RP1 Pursue appropriate opportunities to spread recreational use to those areas that can sustain it and that will benefit from it, ensuring the provision of suitable infrastructure.		
RP2 Ensure that the rights of way network and associated infrastructure (signs, gates, etc) do not detract unnecessarily from the special qualities of the landscape.		
RP3 Seek a consistent approach to the development and delivery of access through Rights of Way management and Improvement Plans.		
RP4 Developments that are likely to lead to an increase in negative recreational effects in an area should contribute to the costs of mitigating and managing these effects.		
RP5 Develop, support and promote programmes and projects that improve health and well-being for all, especially those that are most in need.		
RP6 Increase the range of opportunities for those with restricted mobility and health impairments to experience the AONB.	Undertake 2 projects with key partners	M
Illustrative actions		
Increase the range of activities and media through which people can learn about the AONB.		
Establish a baseline position on the location and extent of desire lines on the northern Malvern Hills.	Commission photography to produce a baseline	
Establish a strategy and programme of action to realise the health benefits of the Malvern Hills AONB with the National Health Foundation Trusts and local surgeries.		
Information and Interpretation		
IP1 Develop a co-ordinated approach to information, interpretation and marketing activity to promote the special qualities of the Malvern Hills area and appropriate behaviour within it.		

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IP2 Promote products and services that support the special qualities of the Malvern Hills.		
IP3 Raise awareness of 'being in the Malvern Hills AONB' and the significance of the designation, including through the provision of appropriate signage.	Explore a large funding bid for an arts based project to help people make an emotional connection with nature (in line with the Colchester Declaration). Develop volunteers to support a John Muir Trust awards in the AONB	H
IP4 Work in partnerships with the technology and science sectors to develop innovative ways of accessing and using information.		
IP5 Enhance local distinctiveness through the maintenance and restoration of appropriate signs and through sign removal where appropriate.		
Illustrative actions		
Promote and provide clear and simple information on alternative transport modes to the private car for accessing the countryside.		
Develop a Malvern's area education resource in conjunction with local schools and/or other interested parties.		
Volunteering		
VP1 Support, encourage and coordinate effective voluntary activity, in all its shapes and forms, that helps deliver the AONB Management Plan.		
VP2 Develop and support networks of volunteers able to assist in specialist activities.	Practical and financial support to Crayfish and geodiversity volunteers	M
VP3 Encourage and support Parish Councils to achieve high standards in working closely with voluntary and community groups and meeting local needs and aspirations within the AONB.		
Illustrative action		
Explore the potential to develop and support a coordinated volunteer network for the whole of the AONB and surrounding area.		

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 6 NOVEMBER 2020

PLANNING MATTERS AND THE MALVERN HILLS AONB PLANNING REPORT 2019 - 2020

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:

- a) **Note the report; and**
- b) **Raise and discuss any issues arising.**

Background

1. There are five Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) who are responsible for planning applications within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (MHAONB): Herefordshire Council, Worcestershire County Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Malvern Hills District Council and the Forest of Dean District Council. It is these LPAs which create the Local Plans and policies that apply to the AONB and which determine planning permissions within the AONB.
2. National planning policy requires that conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty must be given great weight in AONBs. The AONB may also be a consideration in development proposals outside the AONB boundary, if the proposals might affect the AONB itself.
3. The AONB Management Plan (2019-24) is a material consideration in planning within the AONB and its setting, so planners should refer to the Management Plan and supporting guidance when making their decisions on both planning applications and policy formulation. Developers are also encouraged to refer to these documents when drawing up plans and designs.

The role of the AONB Unit in planning

4. The Malvern Hills AONB Unit contributes to the planning process in the following ways:
 - Assistance in preparing Local Plans with Local Planning Authorities including strategy and planning policy development.
 - Providing specialist advice to LPAs on individual planning applications, for example, those that are classified as major developments and/or have a significant effect on the natural beauty of the AONB. We also comment on individual development proposals where they would have an impact on the character of the AONB or where they might establish a precedent for future applications. NB The National Landscapes review of 2019 recommended that AONB Partnerships become statutory consultees for planning applications within their boundaries and settings and a decision on this is awaited.

- Developing guidance on a range of planning related topics. AONB guidance amplifies the content of the Management Plan in relation to development in the AONB and so helps to deliver the plan.
- Supporting the preparation of Local Neighbourhood Plans (LNPs) which can contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.

5. The AONB Unit, via the National Association for AONBs, is also contributing to the national debate about planning; for example, by commenting on the development of planning white papers and proposed changes to the planning system.

Potential changes in National Policy

6. The government has published a new Planning White Paper to 'shake up' the English planning system and has suggested reforms to the existing planning system which will be steppingstones towards meeting the proposals in the Planning White Paper.

The four main proposals are:

1. changes to **the standard method** (a formula to identify the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for, in a way which addresses projected household growth and historic under-supply. The standard method identifies a minimum annual housing need figure (but does not produce a housing requirement figure) for assessing local housing need;
2. securing **First Homes**, sold at a discount to market price for first time buyers, including key workers, through developer contributions in the short term;
3. temporarily **lifting the small sites threshold** below which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing, to up to 40 or 50 units to support SME builders as the economy recovers from the impact of Covid-19; and
4. extending the current **Permission in Principle** to major development so landowners and developers have a fast route to secure the principle of development for housing on sites without having to work up detailed plans first.

7. The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) agrees that change is needed but has concerns about the effects of both the white paper and the planning reforms on protected landscapes. The ideas are also at odds with some of the key policies in the National Planning Policy Framework that 'protect areas or assets of particular importance which provide a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area.' After consulting with individual AONBs the NAAONB has responded as follows:

- The over-arching concern is that the 'build, build, build' focus of the reforms prioritises economic objectives over social and environmental objectives. Weight should be given to all three to achieve sustainable development and the level of protection afforded to AONBs should be increased.
- The new standard method is designed to greatly increase the number of new homes built each year. The over-riding pressure to meet these new housing figures would inevitably result in more housing being built in protected landscapes, especially where the local authority area includes large areas of protected landscapes. More does not necessarily mean 'better', and scant regard has been given to quality or real affordability. The 'broad brush' approach of producing housing numbers for the whole local authority area does

not allow for nuance or address the need for genuinely affordable housing for local people within AONBs. AONBs should be treated in the same way as National Parks and be exempt from general housing targets. This proposal also ignores the 'Levelling up' agenda of the industrial strategy which suggests new homes are needed in the 'forgotten' towns and cities rather than the 'easy build and easy sell' houses on greenfield sites in rural areas.

- The NAAONB welcomes the option of First Homes because in AONBs housing tends to be expensive but wages are often low. Social rented housing is in high demand but often unavailable. The current 'rural exceptions' policy for AONBs is no longer delivering the social housing it should and needs addressing but granting exceptions for First Homes is not the solution and could be very damaging to a protected landscape. New homes should be aligned to new infrastructure and workplaces where possible. There is a need for the housing mix to reflect actual local need and AONBs should be exempt from the 25% First Homes policy unless this is specifically required, especially since any First Homes which cannot be marketed to local people can then be offered elsewhere. This makes them, in effect, lower cost market homes for general sale rather than a housing solution for local people.
- The delivery of genuinely affordable homes is critical to improving affordability within the rural housing market. The smaller site thresholds for delivering affordable housing should be retained.
- Providing a 'permission in principle' (PiP) will inevitably result in negotiating details at later stages of the planning process. The cumulative effects of these negotiations will be time consuming and it will be difficult to make sure that they do not erode the protection and enhancement of protected landscapes. AONBs should be exempted from any expansion of the PiP regime and ideally from that which is already in place.

Local strategy and planning policy development

8. The planning system in England is structured around a plan-led system, aimed at managing development whilst balancing economic development and environmental quality. The Development Plan is the key tool for the successful implementation of these aims at the local level and is made up of a portfolio of documents, covering what can be built and where; creating policies protecting the built and natural environment and delivery good design; implementing the Local Development Scheme; ensuring economic competitiveness; and monitoring the efficiency of the plans and policy.

9. The South Worcestershire Development Plan (covering Worcester City and Malvern Hills and Wychavon Districts) came into effect on 25 February 2016 and is currently being reviewed, in line with Government requirements that local plans should be updated every five years. A revised SWDP is required by 2021 and the review will provide an updated plan period to the year 2041.

10. In furtherance of the review the Malvern Hills AONB Unit has supported the development of a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (LSCA) to inform the selection of possible sites for future development in the setting of the AONB. It has also contributed to various formal consultation documents - including the Preferred Options consultation - and has had follow-up discussions with the planning authorities with regards to addressing the issues raised. In addition, the Unit is currently exploring, with Natural England, Historic England and the Malvern Hills Trust, a new piece of evidence for the next Local Plan relating

to recreational impacts on the Malvern Hills and Commons and how these can be managed and mitigated.

11. The Herefordshire Local Plan was adopted in October 2015, and superseded the previous Unitary Development Plan. The key document in the Local Plan is the Core Strategy, which provides the strategic planning framework for the county's future development needs up to 2031. A range of policies sets out how these needs can be met while at the same time achieving social and environmental objectives. A review of the Local Plan is expected to commence shortly and the Malvern Hills AONB Unit will engage in this as appropriate.

12. The Forest of Dean Local Plan sets out an overall strategy and policies to guide development across the District until 2026. Initial consultation has taken place and work is underway to collect evidence for the next Local Plan. A draft will be ready for consultation by summer 2021 and the Malvern Hills AONB Unit will engage with this.

Neighbourhood Development Plans

13. Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs), along with Local Plans, are a key part of the statutory planning framework. They set out the vision for an area and the planning policies for the use and development of land within a parish or Neighbourhood Area, giving communities an increased ability to influence planning. NDPs must have regard to national planning policy and be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area, but they can respond to local needs and aspirations and provide the 'detail' often missing at a broader scale.

14. Over a period of many years now the Malvern Hills AONB Unit has been actively supporting Parish and Town Councils in the development of NDPs. A key focus for this work has been to ensure that NDPs in the AONB are 'landscape-led', with potential development sites identified via a process of Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment and with NDP policies informed by the AONB Management Plan and guidance documents. The AONB Unit has worked with Wellington Heath, Cradley, Colwall, Malvern Wells, Little Malvern and Welland Parish Councils and with Malvern and Ledbury Town Councils on Neighbourhood Plan development.

A short review of planning application casework 2019/20

15. The AONB Unit comments on up to around 90 planning applications a year where our input can add value to decisions being made about an application. The Unit has two Landscape Architects with planning experience who are supported by planners from Worcestershire County Council. Planning comments are made in the context of policies which protect and enhance the special landscape of the AONB and its setting; this includes applications which are for large scale developments, or small scale developments which will impact on the landscape, such as the conversion of traditional vernacular buildings for equestrian or residential use, or developments which are in open countryside outside towns and villages.

16. Planning casework is identified through the Weekly Lists prepared by each of the Local Planning Authorities and agreed by the AONB Unit. The tables below summarise the planning applications identified as being within the AONB or relevant to the AONB setting for 2019-2020. The numbers in brackets represent numbers of applications recorded last year (2018-2019) for comparison purposes.

SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR PLANNING APPLICATIONS APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020

Table 1 - Number of planning applications identified between April 2019 and March 2020

Local Authority	No. of applications identified	In the AONB	In the AONB setting
Malvern Hills District Council	105 (108)	82 (90)	23 (18)
Herefordshire Council	133 (136)	109 (127)	24 (9)
Forest of Dean District Council	2 (2)	2 (1)	0 (1)
Gloucestershire County Council	0 (0)	0	0
Worcestershire County Council	1 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)
Totals	241 (246)	193 (218)	48 (28)

Table 2 - Number of written responses to planning applications made by the AONB Unit April 2019 to March 2020

Local Authority	No. of written responses	In the AONB	In the AONB setting	No. of objections
Malvern Hills District Council	45 (24)	30 (23)	10 (1)	4 (6)
Herefordshire Council	43 (26)	38 (22)	5 (4)	8 (5)
Forest of Dean District Council	1 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Gloucestershire County Council	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Worcestershire County Council	1 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)
Totals	90 (50)	74 (45)	16 (5)	12 (11)

(2018-19 figures in brackets)

17. The total number of applications identified as being registered in the AONB in 2019 - 20 was slightly lower than in 2018-2019, a decrease split evenly between Malvern Hills District Council and Herefordshire Council. Applications in the Forest of Dean district remained low. Approximately 48% (117) of these were assessed by the Unit against relevant planning policies, the AONB Management Plan and guidance.

18. The number of written responses to planning applications increased significantly (44% increase) when compared to last year's numbers, with 21 additional responses submitted to Malvern Hills District Council and 17 to Herefordshire Council. There was also one response submitted to Forest of Dean District Council and one to Worcestershire County Council. This increase was largely due to the submission of a larger number of shorter responses to more minor applications.

19. Each of these responses was subsequently followed up, to find out the decision made and to identify whether the decision was informed by the AONB Unit's comments.

20. Table 3 (below) shows the number of AONB Unit's comments in this report period taken into account by planning officers and, in some cases, conditions suggested by the AONB Unit (in particular in relation to materials, colour and lighting) which have been included within approvals. There is also evidence of case officers advising applicants to improve their designs or respond to other concerns raised by the AONB Unit.

21. The statistics suggest a decrease in the percentage of responses where AONB responses have been positively applied in the planning decisions. These results have been raised and discussed with the AONB Steering Group.

Table 3 – Summary statistics for planning decisions April 2019 to March 2020

Local Authority	No. of written responses	Approved/ Prior approval not required	Refused/ Prior approval/ permission required/ Appeal dismissed	Withdrawn	Pending/Pre-app/ Determination declined etc.	% successful*	Compliance**
Malvern Hills District Council	45 (24)	30 (9)	9 (8)	0 (5)	6	53% (75%)	😊
Herefordshire Council	43 (26)	25 (18)	11 (2)	3 (0)	4	34% (56%)	😞
Forest of Dean District Council	1 (0)	0 (0)	(0)	0 (0)	0	100%	😊
Gloucestershire County Council	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0	N/A	N/A
Worcestershire County Council	1 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0	100%	😊
Totals	90 (50)	56 (27)	21 (10)	3 (5)	10	52% (65%)	😊

(2018-19 figures in brackets)

* % of planning decisions which refused proposals due to their potential impact on the AONB and planning decisions which included full mitigation of potential impacts on the AONB

** < 50% = 😞, 50% - 75% = 😐, ≥ 75% = 😊

Objections

22. The AONB Unit objected to twelve planning proposals last year (13% of all written responses submitted). In all but two of these cases (84%) the decision made was in accordance with the AONB Unit's recommendations. They fell into the following categories:

- planning permission was refused;
- planning permission was approved but only based on improved development details or details secured by relevant conditions;
- prior approval was refused; or

- the planning application was withdrawn.

Overarching trends

23. The following trends have been identified in the last year:

Agricultural buildings/Permitted development applications

24. It appears that the AONB Unit's comments are not always taken into account when considering applications for prior approval of agricultural buildings. For example, in the case of a large agricultural development at Thumpers Patch, Mathon Herefordshire; the AONB Unit was concerned with the location, scale and materials proposed for this development but the Officer's report did not include the matters highlighted by the AONB Unit.

25. We recognise the limitations of the permitted development process and pressures put on Case Officers to make decisions within 21 days, however, we feel that more consideration should be given to the siting of these structures within the AONB. Badly designed agricultural buildings can permanently damage the special qualities of the AONB as these structures are often large and highly visible.

26. At the same time, it should be recognised that Herefordshire Council did 'back up' the AONB Unit's concerns in relation to a new agricultural building at Chances Pitch. In this case HC decided that Prior Approval was required for the new building and this precipitated an appeal by the applicant. The appeal was allowed by a Planning Inspector, albeit that conditions re. materials were placed on the development.

Materials and colours

27. As with the previous year, on several occasions conditions in relation to materials and colours suggested by the AONB Unit have been included within approvals. Whilst this guarantees some control over choices, the conditions very rarely include a requirement for a specific material or a specific colour. This means that there was often a need for additional AONB Unit involvement during the discharge of conditions stage.

Affordable housing

28. The AONB Unit expressed their concerns over the lack of affordable housing provision on larger development sites located within and in the setting of the AONB. Whilst we noted that there are a number of factors contributing to calculating affordable housing on sites, such as local policies and local housing needs assessments, there is a shortage of affordable housing within AONBs nationally. Good practice within other protected landscapes suggests that on rural exception sites 100% affordable housing should be the starting point and 75% should be the absolute minimum, with at least 50% of any affordable housing that is provided being affordable in perpetuity (e.g. social-rented housing). We understand the need for projects to be affordable/profitable for applicants, but this should not be at the expense of the provision of affordable housing for the AONB's communities.

Ledbury Viaduct Planning Inquiry

29. One proposed planning application which may be worth singling out at this time is the appeal by Bloor Homes Western, in respect of land North of Ledbury Viaduct.

30. On 11th December 2019 Herefordshire Council's Planning Committee made a decision (contrary to Officers' recommendations) to refuse planning permission for a mixed used development including the erection for up to 625 homes (including affordable housing), up to 2.9 hectares of B1 employment land, a canal corridor, public open space (including a linear park), access, drainage and ground modelling works and other associated works (planning reference 171532). Bloor Homes (the Appellant) appealed to the Planning Inspectorate pursuant to Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against the Council's decision.

31. On 18th February 2020 Herefordshire Council (following legal advice of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer) made a decision to withdraw the reasons for refusal of the planning permission made on 11th December 2019. It was determined that pursuing the defence of the reasons for refusal by the Council could be seen as unreasonable, given there was no technical evidence to support the grounds for refusal. Herefordshire Council recorded that it was also having difficulty securing technical experts who would provide their evidence in support of the Council's decision to refuse the planning application. This decision was taken to both mitigate the reputational damage to the Council and to limit the very significant costs that the Council could incur.

32. The proposed development site is on the edge of the Malvern Hills AONB and the Unit objected to the proposed development on the basis that it could give rise to a significant increase in vehicular traffic in the area, which would be contrary to Policy TRP6 of the AONB Management plan ('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. Seek compensation for such effects where relevant.') Impacts on the AONB were cited by Herefordshire Council's Planning Committee as one of the reasons for refusing planning permission on 11th December 2019.

33. Following the decision made by Herefordshire Council on 18th February 2020 Ledbury Town Council decided to act as a Rule 6 party at the Public Inquiry, meaning that they would take a very active part in opposition to the appellants. Ledbury Town Council asked Paul Esrich (on behalf of the AONB Unit) to appear as an expert witness at the PI. After due consideration the AONB Steering Group decided that this would not be appropriate since it may be interpreted by some parties as a 'conflict of interest' with that of the formal position taken by Herefordshire Council – one of the AONB Partnership's contributing local authorities. However, the AONB Unit did provide a written representation to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) in support of its original objection and provided answers to questions and points of clarification to Ledbury Town Council as it prepared Proofs of Evidence.

34. A delayed Public Inquiry (PI) took place virtually, the first part in July 2020 and the second part in September 2020. The PI is now complete. Whilst the Inquiry was conducted by a Planning Inspector it has been decided that the Secretary of State for Planning, Communities and Local Government will make the appeal decision, taking

into account the Inspector's recommendation. At the time of writing an appeal decision has not been made.

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MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 6 NOVEMBER 2020

A NATURE RECOVERY PLAN FOR THE MALVERN HILLS AONB

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the report;**
- b) Raise and discuss any issues arising.**

Background

1. The overarching ambition of the UK Government's 25-Year Environment Plan (YEP) is to 'leave our environment in a better state than we found it and to pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future' (Defra 2018). The plan highlights six key areas for action, one of which is to establish a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) for England, motivated by the now clear and obvious fact that our natural environment is in decline. The aim of an NRN is to protect and restore our ecology (wildlife), as well as providing greater public enjoyment of the countryside; increased carbon capture; and improvements in water quality and flood management etc.
2. Natural England has produced guidance which aims to help the designers of 'Nature Networks' by identifying the principles of network design and describing the evidence that underpins the desirable features of these networks. The Nature Networks guidance from Natural England stresses very clearly that nature recovery is about benefiting people as well as wildlife.
3. It is clear that delivery of an NRN for the country will be dependent on local activity and that there will be many different bodies involved and many different drivers for change. For example, accountable bodies (probably Local Authorities) look set to be given new legal duties to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies under the Environment Bill (expected to become law in Spring 2021). In addition, local planning authorities will be required by law to deliver biodiversity net gain through the planning process.
4. All AONB Partnerships in England are committed to producing Nature Recovery Plans (NRPs) for their designated landscapes. This commitment is one of a series of pledges made by the AONB network in the Colchester Declaration (see Appendix 1) designed to help Government deliver its 25 Year Environment Plan (YEP). It should be noted that the Colchester Declaration also contains a commitment to embed an

ecosystems services¹ approach into all AONB Management Plans by 2024. Therefore, it may be helpful to think about a Nature Recovery Plan as also being a central core of the next Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan.

Summary

5. In very crude terms there are two key phases to producing a Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB.
 - Phase 1 - data gathering to establish a spatial baseline and a series of theoretical opportunities which will promote nature recovery, followed by
 - Phase 2 - stakeholder engagement to discuss and agree a way forward, culminating in the production of the Plan itself.
6. It is intended that the final plan will be spatial, setting out key aspirations for the management of different parts of the AONB in the future.
7. The Malvern Hills AONB straddles the three counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Since there will be many different partner bodies working towards nature recovery in the area it would seem highly desirable if not imperative that a NRP for the AONB works seamlessly across local authority areas within the AONB as well as providing a seamless transition across the AONB boundary to the countryside beyond. It is imperative that all those involved in and with an interest in promoting nature recovery across the 3 counties can work towards the delivery of agreed and shared objectives and targets. No one wants to see a NRP for the AONB prescribing actions that are at odds with, for example, a Nature Recovery Strategy for Worcestershire or Herefordshire. With this in mind, the MH AONB Unit has been liaising closely with key partners over recent months in relation to this work, including local authorities, Local Nature Partnerships, other AONBs and Natural England.
8. It is clear that different partners and different geographical areas are at different stages with nature recovery planning work. Work to assess and map nature recovery opportunities in Gloucestershire is very well advanced whilst both Herefordshire and Worcestershire are at relatively early stages in the process. Pleasingly, discussions indicate that key partners all seem to accept:
 - I. the desirability of adopting a consistent (or at least a compatible) approach to this work across the 3 Counties and
 - II. the need for a broad-based approach to nature recovery based on Natural Capital rather than ecological criteria alone.

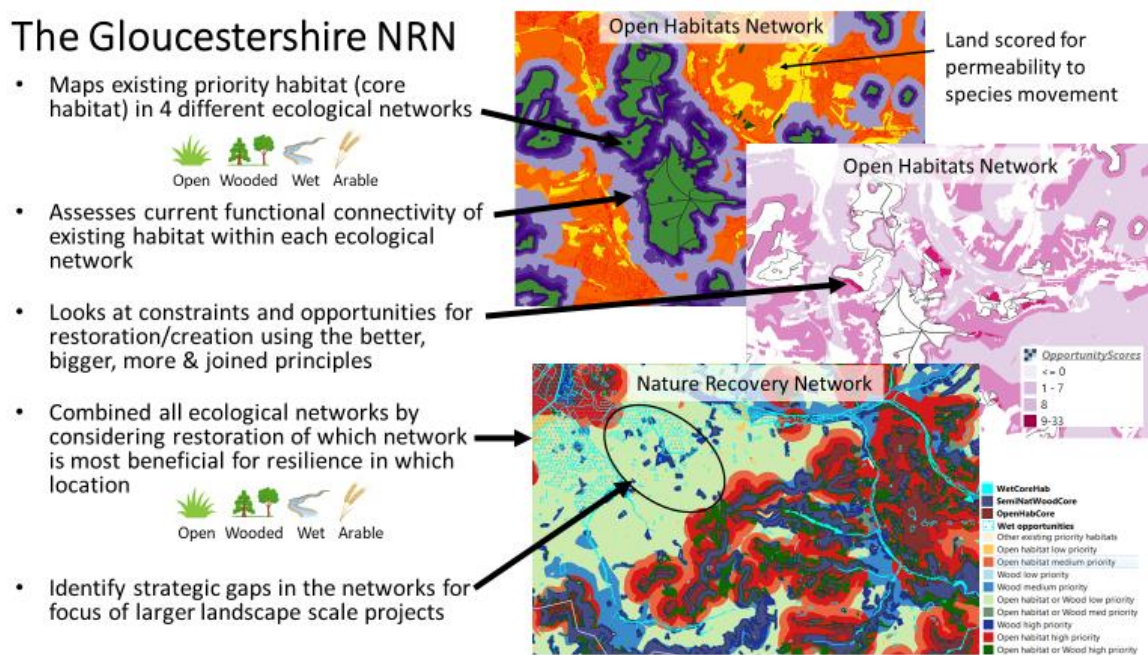
¹ Natural Capital is the stock of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things. The benefits people obtain from this Natural Capital stock such as food and timber, recreational opportunities, aesthetic values, health benefits, flood risk regulation, air and water quality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

Methodology

9. Following on from the work that has been carried out in Gloucestershire (which itself is adapted from work in South West England) it is expected that there will be two parts to data gathering to establish a spatial baseline and a series of theoretical opportunities (phase 1 of the Nature Recovery Plan).

1. Ecological mapping – all existing habitats (woodlands, orchards, grassland etc) are mapped. Opportunities for expanding these habitats are then scored using least cost distance analysis². This approach is summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1



2. Natural Capital mapping – all existing habitats are assigned a theoretical score for each ecosystem service they provide (for example, flood mitigation or carbon storage). These scores are then modified based on the spatial, relational aspect or condition of the habitat. For instance, woodland may be good at removing air pollution, but if it is not in an area of poor air quality, it will not be performing that particular service.

Missing links?

10. The development of a Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB, based on a broad, natural capital approach (as outlined above) seems to reflect a more integrated approach to informing the future management of the area and dovetails with the direction of travel being taken in government with respect to the next generation of financial assistance for land owners and managers (ELMS). However, the approach

² Least cost path analysis is a distance analysis tool within GIS that uses the least cost path or the path between two locations that costs the least to those travelling along it to determine the most cost-effective route between a source and destination.

to NC mapping in Gloucestershire described above appears to lack a way of integrating and scoring **landscape character**, **historic landscape character** and **geodiversity**. These are critical to the special character of the AONB and a piece of work may be needed to ensure that these elements are factored into the above model. Conversations with Historic England, local authorities and the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust are taking place on this subject.

The current state of play

11. The overall picture of who is doing what towards producing nature recovery plans across the 3 counties is rather complex but it is hoped that the first phase of works to establish a spatial baseline and a series of theoretical opportunities for the Malvern Hills AONB will be completed by April 2021. Following that, phase 2 can begin with an expectation that a draft Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB may be in place by October 2021.

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Appendix 1 – The Colchester Declaration 2019

Set against a backdrop of unprecedented concern for the future of the natural world, and intergovernmental reports that the current global response to the effects of human impact on nature is insufficient – the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty believes that now is the time to significantly increase the scale and pace of nature conservation activity in AONBs. Using our unique network and partnership model, we are making a collective Declaration on Nature in AONBs, setting out our strategy for change. With many AONB host authorities having taken the step of declaring a Climate Emergency we are demonstrating our readiness to act to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

We believe

1. Natural Beauty has intrinsic value and means so much to people
2. AONBs should be places of rich, diverse and abundant wildlife
3. Nature recovery is central to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
4. Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Designated landscapes offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change
5. The network of AONBs and National Parks, their teams, partnerships, authorities and stakeholders offer a unique solution to tackling environmental challenges

We pledge

By July 2020

1. To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature.
2. To prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for each AONB

By 2024

1. To embed an ecosystems services approach into all AONB Management Plans
2. To ensure all AONB management plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero

By 2030

1. That at least 200,000 ha of SSSIs in AONBs will be in favourable condition
2. That at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/ restored in AONBs to further support the natural movement of plants and animals
3. That at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place
4. That, by each AONB immediately adopting a species on the threatened list and by preparing and delivering a Species Action Plan, at least thirty species relevant to AONBs will be taken off the list by 2030. We call on Westminster and Welsh Governments to provide the power and resources to make these targets achievable

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MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 6 NOVEMBER 2020

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND 2020/21 UPDATE REPORT

Background

1. The table below shows the Sustainable Development Fund's grant commitments for the financial year 2020/21. The budget is £12,190. With the difficulties of gathering projects this year, and conducting Panel meetings, these projects have been allocated to the SDF budget for this year. The normal procedures hope to be resumed next year

Summary

SDF Budget Report at 15/10/20			
	Budget	£12,190	
Project Title		Committed	claimed
Colwall Orchard Trust orchard restoration		£3,125.00	
Crayfish Ark		£750.00	
Dovecote repairs		£900.00	
Barton Court history		£500.00	
Geosite maintenance		£1,500.00	
Dingle phone box		£300.00	
Croft Farm orchard trees		£100.00	
Malvern Lost Fritillary Project		£500	£400
Colwall Orchard Group Interp. Board.		£100	
Totals		£7,775	£400
Fund admin 10% of spend		£777	
Total + admin		£8,552	
Variance with budget		£3,638	

Recommendation

1. **The Committee is requested to:**
 - a) **Note and comment on the report.**

Contact Points

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**MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
INFORMATION ITEMS**

Management Plan ref. (abridged)	Project
<p>LP3 Promote positive change to landowners, managers, developers etc.</p>	<p><u>Land management advice</u> 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 10 advisory visits taking place in 2019/20 and a similar number expected this year.</p>
<p>BP2 Conserve, enhance and expand key habitats and populations of key species in line with local biodiversity priorities</p>	<p><u>Skylarks in the AONB</u> The AONB Unit worked with a farmer in the east of the AONB in the winter of 2019/20 with a view to creating skylark plots – small crop-free areas in winter sown cereal fields – to give these ground nesting birds a better chance of breeding successfully the following spring/summer. Unfortunately the very damp winter meant that it was too wet to take machinery onto the fields to spray off the plots, providing an example of how extremes of weather can have a direct effect on conservation activity. If the farmer is willing we will try again this winter.</p>
<p>BP4 Improve knowledge and understanding of the AONB’s biodiversity...</p>	<p><u>Botanical survey of grasslands</u> In July 2020 a highly qualified botanist carried out a rapid walk over survey of grasslands across 7 land holdings in the AONB. The survey identified areas which are species-rich and of most interest for nature conservation and areas of relatively low conservation value. The results have been shared with landowners and provide a basis for discussions about future management within land holdings, for example, identifying areas which could usefully be kept free from grazing in the early summer to benefit nectar-feeding insects. The survey results have also led to conversations with 2 owners about restoring species-richness to meadows.</p>
<p>BP1 – 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</p>	<p><u>Highways Verges Management Pilot Project.</u> This two-year pilot project (part-funded by the Natural Networks programme - a grants project funded by the European Structural Investment Fund and managed by Worcestershire County Council) is now complete. Three grassland areas in the east of the AONB have been enhanced: part of the recreational playing field in Malvern Wells, a highway verge in Castlemorton parish and a highway verge underneath Little Malvern Priory (Little Malvern and Welland parish). Works have included stripping</p>

HP1 – Conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment

the top layer of nutrient rich topsoil, reseeded with wildflower and grass mixes and cutting and removing growth at the end of the year. This is experimental work, supported by Worcestershire Highways, and helps to demonstrate WCC's commitment to making Worcestershire a pollinator friendly county.

Hope End Park

This is on Historic England's Heritage Assets Register. The Park is divided into 6 ownerships and is currently classed as being in a 'vulnerable' condition. The AONB Unit brought together the significant owners to create a plan for the future care of the Park. Resulting from that, woods were thinned where once Elizabeth Barratt (later a poet and even later Barrett-Browning by marriage) once wandered composing; and new specimen trees were planted in the park.

FP6 – Encourage the take-up of options and management practices that benefit the natural and cultural capital of the AONB.**Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund**

The Facilitation Fund is a government supported fund to help people and organisations that bring farmers, foresters, and other land managers together to improve the natural environment at a landscape scale. The AONB Unit successfully bid to the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund to support owners of land in an area of land west of the Malvern Hills. In December 2019, an event was held for landowners to describe the mapping work done on habitats and species, by Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. An audience of 35 were shown, with the help of the mapping data, what they could do to create landscape networks, and where on their land, they could do it. A second event, (delayed due to Covid) was held in September 2020 in a Covid-secure location where 20 people heard about Regenerative Farming from two local farmers, renowned for their discoveries in this field. Turning their backs on short-term high yields, their long-term management of the land had brought money to their pockets and wildlife to their land. With the growing interest in landscape networks, two more landowners joined the Facilitation Group; their land making useful linkages between existing Group members holdings'.

Countryside Stewardship

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

FP7: Promote local and seasonal produce and support the**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

development of local services and markets

BDP10: Support the recycling, re-use and limited and appropriate extraction of small quantities of locally distinctive building materials.

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

TRP2: Promote sustainable transport to enhance tranquillity and minimise the impact of traffic on the AONB; encouraging a safer and more attractive environment for walking, cycling and horse riding

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

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

butcher to look into marketing the meat and making the link between food and wildlife conservation.

Malvern Stone Bank

Recognising that Malvern stone, which adds much to the local character of buildings, was often being sent to landfill, the AONB Unit set up a stone bank. It ran successfully under a local stone-walling contractor for many years, with the AONB Unit providing help with a licence fee. The bank has established its reputation and now is being run independently.

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.

Worcester to Malvern Active Travel Corridor

Back in 2014, the Sustainable Development Fund together with Sustrans (national cycle network charity), planned a cycle path between Malvern and Worcester. Nowadays these paths are used by so many 'active' groups that they've been rechristened 'Active Travel Corridors' to mirror central Government's terminology. Worcestershire County Council is now leading the way on this project, helped by Westminster smiling on active travel, and the vast improvements made to the cycling network in Worcester that this 'corridor' will link to.

New guidance documents

The AONB Unit has now published two new guidance documents: 'Guidance on how development can respect landscape in views' and 'Guidance on lighting'. Both are being used by planners and developers.

Images of the AONB

The AONB Unit has worked with well-known local photographer Jan Sedlacek to produce images of the AONB. Jan's images were shown in Exhibition Walk – outside Waitrose in Malvern – in December and, by popular demand, again in the Spring of 2020.

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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