

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee



Agenda

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

**Friday, 1 May 2015, 10.00 am
Mathan Village Hall, Malvern**

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Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Friday, 1 May 2015, 10.00 am, Mathon Village Hall

Members

Elected Members:

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

**Non-Elected
members:**

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

Co-Opted Members:

Mr A Lee	Herefordshire Local Access Forum
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Agenda

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3	Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting	

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

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Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

1 May 2015

5. AONB BUDGET AND WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

Background

1. A grant application to support the core work of the AONB Partnership in 2015/16 was considered by members of the Steering Group before being submitted to Defra in January 2015. Defra has now issued a grant offer letter. NB flexibility needs to be employed when delivering the AONB budget to ensure that it best supports the AONB Partnership. Therefore, details of the budget/work programme may change through the year and money may be moved from one head to another to reflect this.

Summary

2. A summary of the core budget and expected key work tasks is provided in Appendix 1 and 3 respectively. Budget figures from previous years are provided for comparison. The main points to note are as follows.
3. **Budget:** The total budget for 2015/16 is expected to be £179,039. This is the same overall budget figure as for 2014/15. In the current economic climate this 'hold-the-line position' is very positive, and should be seen as a signal from core partners that the work of AONB Partnerships is valued. NB Defra has reduced its contributions to National Park Authorities by c. 2% over the same period.
4. Of the total, £155,039 can be identified as 'core' funding with £24,000 allocated to the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). Central government is providing all of the funding for the SDF and a maximum of 75% of the total core budget (a combined total of £139,384). Local authorities in the area are expected to provide the match funding to core costs (a total of £39,655).
5. **Voluntary contributions:** 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 very small number of Councils and, following some success, a small number of additional Councils were contacted. Appendix 2 summarises contributions received in 2014/15 and those which are known thus far for 2015/16. Whilst some individual contributions may be small they can add up to very decent totals which is of considerable benefit when

added to the overall budget for delivering the Partnership's work programme. Parish financial contributions can be seen as a tangible expression of how local councils value the work of the AONB Partnership.

6. **Work priorities:** As ever, the Unit's work programme for 2015/16 continues to be centred around the implementation of the AONB Management Plan.
7. **Project funding:** Outwith Core and SDF it is expected that c. £100,000 will be spent on the Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project during 2015.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) **Note the budget for 2015/16;**
- 2) **Comment on the overall direction and work priorities for the year ahead.**

Appendix 1 –Budget for Malvern Hills AONB Partnership in 2015/16

Element	Budget					
	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Staff (costs inc. salary, NI, super, training, travel, NI etc)						
AONB Manager	£51,910	£50,400	£50,500	£49,780	£49,560	£48,510
AONB Assistant Manager	£39,300	£38,220	£38,320	£37,770	£37,600	£37,690
AONB Technical Support Officer	£15,570	£15,160	£14,960	£15,488	£15,486	£25,670
Strategy Officer	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	£9,928
Project Officer		£3,669				
<i>Sub total</i>	<i>£114,780</i>	<i>£115,449</i>	<i>£111,780</i>	<i>£111,038</i>	<i>£110,646</i>	<i>£121,798</i>
Accommodation/office equipment	£8,742	£8,242	£8,242	£8,242	£8,242	£10,000
Partnership budget for PR, events etc.						
NAAONB membership	£2,500					
Annual review	£900					
Small grants scheme for landscape and biodiversity improvements	£3,000					
Landscape scale project development	£3,500					
External advice	£3,000					
Neighbourhood Planning	£3,000					
Large projects	£4,380					
Communications	£2,000					
<i>Sub total</i>	<i>£22,280</i>	<i>£22,111</i>	<i>£27,236</i>	<i>£27,300</i>	<i>£31,887</i>	<i>£29,941</i>
Partnership running costs (Council support, IT, personnel, finance etc.)	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237
Sustainable Development Fund	£24,000	£24,000	£34,807	£45,140	£50,089	£63,539
Total Budget	<u>£179,039</u>	<u>£179,039</u>	<u>£191,302</u>	<u>£200,957</u>	<u>£210,101</u>	<u>£234,515</u>

Further Information on the subject of this report is available from Paul Esrich
 ☎: on 01684 560616

Appendix 2 – Voluntary contributions from Parish/Town Councils

Parish/Town Council	Contribution	
	2015/16	2014/15
Colwall		£1,000
Cradley		£100
Ledbury		£350
Malvern Wells	£800	£800
Welland		
West Malvern	£300	£300
Total		£2,550

Appendix 3 – Unit Work Programme for 2015/16

Management Plan Policy	Task
LP1 Manage the landscape of the AONB in accordance with key documents such as the AONB Landscape Strategy, LCA and HLCs.	Ensure that comments on planning responses incorporate wider landscape issues.
LP2 Restore distinctive landscapes and landscape features that have been significantly degraded.	Work with the Three Counties Agricultural Society to enhance 3 landscape elements at the showground Ensure that proposals for biodiversity enhancements under BP3 are landscape 'proofed'.
LP2 Restore distinctive landscapes and landscape features that have been significantly degraded.	Liaise with WPD and landowners to ensure the completion of x undergrounding schemes.
LP3 Identify and promote opportunities for positive landscape change to landowners, managers, government and all those with an influence over land.	Promote AONB guidance to all interested parties. Work with MHC to research options for securing long-term management of the Commons by grazing
LP4 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.	Work with Welland Parish Council to develop ideas for local landscape enhancements using S106 monies.
LP6 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.	Input to County Waste and Minerals Plans to ensure that the quest for sustainability does not adversely impact on landscape character.
GP2 Secure best practice in geodiversity management within and adjacent to designated sites.	Support and resource H&WEHT volunteers in managing x Local Geological Sites (LGS)
BP1 Conserve, enhance and expand key habitats and populations of key species in line with local biodiversity priorities and the England Biodiversity Strategy 2020.	Manage and support a TCTOP Project Officer Deliver year 1 of the TCTOP.

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	Explore a bid for funding to purchase fruit trees for planting within the TCTOP.
BP2 Restore the condition of degraded habitats in line with local and national biodiversity priorities.	X traditional orchards managed within TCTOP
BP3 Enhance the wildlife value of the countryside and achieve greater buffering and connectivity between key habitats within the AONB and between the AONB and the countryside beyond.	Implement x improvements as part of the 'landscape scale' biodiversity project East of the Malvern Hills project Explore the creation of a new landscape scale project area in the north of the AONB.
BP4 In exercising development control decisions, secure developer contributions to enhance the natural environment.	Work with local communities (in particular Welland and Malvern Wells Parish Councils) in securing relevant developer contributions (as and when development proposals arise)
BP5 Undertake survey and research to provide decision-makers with accurate and appropriate data.	Collect new data to inform a landscape scale proposal for the north of the AONB
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 and English Heritage advice and guidance.	Work with EH, MHDC and others to secure a progressive solution to redevelopment at Hawthorn's Farmyard. This to form a good practice case study on farmstead redevelopment in accordance with county and national guidance.
HP2 Identify and improve the evidence base of locally important heritage assets of the AONB in order to understand better the significance and condition of the historic environment, which will underpin future policy.	Support communities in the AONB to submit proposals for listing of locally important heritage assets (in Worcestershire part of AONB)
HP5 Encourage the sustainable use of historic buildings, particularly those identified as being at risk.	Liaise with owners and LA buildings conservation officers to help restore the condition of two listed buildings
FP1 Encourage the take-up of grant options and management practices that benefit the distinctive natural and historic environment of the AONB.	Work with NE and others to ensure that new CS grants benefit x owners in the AONB.
FP2 Bring woodlands, orchards and other characteristic habitats into favourable conservation condition	Liaise with owners of PAWS woodlands and work with the WT PAWS Officer to develop


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through management regimes that provide an economic return; for example, through the production of timber, wood fuel and other sustainable uses.	restoration plans for 2 AONB woodlands. X orchards managed through the TCTOP. Support a biomass study which benefits the AONB
FP4 Promote targeted native woodland creation in appropriate locations.	Work with Malvern Community Forest and other partners to identify and promote woodland creation opportunities East of the Malvern Hills
FP7 Identify and promote good agricultural practices that encourage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 WWT and EA to deliver improvements in land (and water) management, with a focus on the Teme Catchment
FP8 Maintain and develop the skills required to manage the landscape and its special qualities.	Provide training in traditional orchard management skills for x volunteers as part of TCTOP
LWP1 Support the production of community-led plans, strategies and statements (such as Neighbourhood Development Plans) that satisfy the requirements of Section 85 of the CRow Act 2000, and encourage and maintain the vitality and diversity of rural community life.	Work with at least two Parish Councils to develop Neighbourhood Development Plans in the AONB. Work with Colwall PC to complete its NDP.
LWP2 Support community initiatives that promote the management of key habitats, appropriate renewable energy schemes, energy efficiency, recycling and community transport.	Work with Welland Parish Council and members of the local community to identify habitat enhancements (see BP4 above)
LWP4 Support the provision of a variety of housing that is appropriate to the character of the area and meets local community needs.	Ensure that, if necessary, the AONB helps to play its part in meeting local housing need.
BDP1 Development in the AONB and its setting should be in accordance with approved local	Promote AONB Guidance on Building Design, including organising bespoke

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design and capacity studies, including the AONB Guidance on Building Design.	training for planning authorities.
BDP2 Development proposals should be informed by the need to protect or enhance key views to and from the AONB, using AONB guidance in relevant cases.	Promote the AONB views guidance and ensure that key views are recognised in relevant planning responses.
BDP 3 Lighting schemes, particularly in the rural areas of the AONB, should be kept to a minimum and only installed where absolutely necessary. All lighting should accord with good practice in minimising light pollution.	Promote good practice guidance on lighting, in general and in relation to specific development proposals. Work with Herefordshire Council and other local partners to achieve a more environmentally friendly solution to street lighting in the AONB.
BDP5 Equestrian development should proceed in accordance with best practice guidelines, including the AONB guidance on keeping horses in the landscape.	Promote good practice guidance on keeping horses, in general and in relation to specific development proposals Finalise and promote good practice pilot site
BDP8 Support the recycling, re-use and limited extraction of small quantities of locally distinctive building materials, such as Malvern stone, where this is needed to help retain local distinctiveness in the built environment.	Develop proposals and work with industry and local authorities to implement them (NB lease on Brockhill Farm up this year)
TP1 Stimulate and support sustainable tourism practices in the AONB	Find three new AONB businesses to include within the 'Our Land' offer
TP3 Provide a quality public realm with good access and accessibility to facilities and features that attract tourists.	Work with MHDC in the delivery of the Route to the Hills project.
TP6 Work in partnership to develop the Malverns as an area for showcasing new tourism technologies.	Develop the interactive pilot map for the AONB.
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.

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 on 01684 560616

TRP6 Develop dedicated routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders within the AONB and between the AONB and surrounding areas.	Progress thinking on a cycle route between Peachfield Road and the 3 Counties Showground.
RP4 Ensure that the rights of way network and associated infrastructure (signs, gates, etc) do not detract unnecessarily from the special qualities of the landscape.	Establish an up-to-date position on use of signage across the 3 council areas in the AONB
RP5 Promote a simple and clear message to recreational users about access rights and responsibilities	Cycle leaflet?
RP6 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.	Make contact with local health and well-being boards relevant to the AONB
IP2 Form partnerships with the technology and science sectors to develop innovative ways of accessing and using information.	Continue to form part of the Malvern based Tourism and Technology Group

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Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

1 May 2015

6. A SUMMARY OF PLANNING AND STRATEGY WORK IN 2014/15

Background

Strategic Consultation Work

1. The AONB Unit inputs to consultations on planning matters on behalf of the AONB Partnership. As well as responding to consultations on Local Plans and other 'strategic' plans, the AONB Unit looks at the weekly lists covering some 200 planning applications per year in the AONB and its setting.
2. During 2014/15 29 days of planning consultancy time was given to advising the Unit on strategic planning issues and development management. This is in addition to some commissioned advice from Landscape Architects and a significant amount of time provided by members of the staff Unit. This report provides a summary of the main aspects of the work undertaken in 2014-2015.
3. During the year the AONB Unit responded to consultations on significant planning and strategy documents. In some cases responses were sent jointly with the Wye Valley AONB Unit.
4. Herefordshire County Council published a pre-submission draft of the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy 2011 – 2031 in May 2014. The AONB Unit submitted a joint response with the Wye Valley AONB Unit. The AONB Units were pleased to see that the protection and enhancement of AONBs is included in the list of key issues to be addressed in the Local Plan. The Council has now held the Public Examination hearing and is consulting on modifications.
5. The South Worcestershire Development Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State and is now at the Examination stage. At the Examination in October 2013, the Inspector asked the three Councils to reconsider their housing numbers with a view to adding a further 5000 houses to the plan. A call for sites in March 2014 resulted in an additional 550 sites being proposed. The Councils are now consulting on Proposed Modifications to the Plan. These include only seven new sites in Malvern Hills District and none within the AONB.
6. The next stage of the Examination will be in May 2015

Further Information on the subject of this report is available from Paul Esrich

☎: on 01684 560616

Planning Applications

and will consider all the sites in the original Submission Draft and the new sites from the Proposed Modifications. The only site within the AONB is at Green Lane, Malvern Wells, where there is a proposal for 35 houses. The AONB objected to development on this site at the pre-submission stage on the grounds of soundness. These representations are still to be considered by the Inspector and we await his final report later this year.

7. The Forest of Dean Core Strategy was adopted in February 2012. An Allocations Plan was consulted on in August and September 2014 but there were no sites within the AONB, so no comments were required.
8. Table 1 contains a summary of the planning applications identified as being within the AONB for 2014-2015. Figures in brackets are for 2013-14.

Table 1 - Summary Statistics for Planning Applications April 2014 to March 2015

Local Authority	No. applications	No. site visits	No. written comments
Malvern Hills District Council	95 (104)	4 (7)	17 (11)
Herefordshire Council	99 (99)	5 (7)	13 (8)
Forest of Dean District Council	1 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Gloucestershire County Council	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Worcestershire County Council	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Totals	196 (205)	9 (14)	30 (19)

9. The total number of applications was virtually identical to 2013-2014 and has remained fairly consistent for a number of years. Also the split was very similar between the 5 planning authorities. It is noticeable that there has been an increase in the number of applications requiring a written response.
10. The applications summarised in Table 2 in Appendix 1 are considered to be some of the most significant applications in the AONB in 2014-2015. An analysis of

the decisions made suggests the comments made by the AONB Unit seem to have influenced either the decision made or the conditions applied to these significant applications. Although across all the applications the majority have been approved, it seems we are continuing to have some success in preventing significant developments in the AONB.

Planning Appeals

11. Three appeals have been dismissed in the AONB during the year as follows:

- Conversion of a rural building to a dwelling at Vinesyard Farm, Cradley (APP/W1850/A/13/2208917)
- Two house at Parsleys Patch, Longley Green (APP/J1860/A/14/2222266)
- Conversion of a barn to a single dwelling at Hollybed Street, Castlemorton (APP/J1860/A/14/2217865)

12. The first two included the AONB as a significant factor in the decision.

A change in planning advisory work

13. In the interests of securing best value and in order to meet Worcestershire County Council's procedures on employing external consultants when a similar service is available in-house at a comparable cost the AONB Unit is no longer receiving planning advice from The Planning Company. From 1 April 2015 Worcestershire County Council's in-house planning staff are providing this advice, initially on a trial basis. The nature of the call-off contract is unchanged, as is the working association with the Wye Valley AONB.

Recommendation

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

- 1) **Note the summary of planning activity in 2014-15 and provide any comments.**
- 2) **Note the change in arrangements for providing planning advice to the AONB Unit.**
- 3) **Consider whether to support a letter of thanks to Colin Blundel, Director of the Planning Company in Worcester, for his advice over the last 8 years.**

Appendix 1

Table 2 – Summary of Significant Applications in 2014-2015

Application	Summary of comments submitted	Issues and outcomes
<p>Proposed 4 bedroom house and associated garage</p> <p>Brooklands, Stocks Road, Alfrick, Worcestershire, WR6 5HD</p> <p>14/00999/FUL</p>	<p>Objection as this would be a large scale dwelling in open countryside within the AONB. The application fails to recognize that the site is within an AONB. The building would be isolated and prominent and would not follow guidance in the 'Guidance on Building Design'. The economic and social benefits are clearly outweighed by the environmental harm.</p>	<p>Refused</p> <p>The AONB was the principal reason for refusal. Also the development was not considered to be sustainable.</p>
<p>Outline planning application for a residential development of up to 36 dwellings (14 affordable) (Use Class C3), means of access and associated works (with all other matters relating to appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved).</p> <p>Land adj Broadlands Drive, Malvern, Worcestershire</p> <p>14/01153/OUT</p>	<p>Whilst the proposed site is located outside the AONB boundary it clearly forms part of the setting of the Malvern Hills. The principal concerns from the AONB perspective are, therefore, with effects on views towards and from the AONB, and the ridge of the Hills in particular. Development of the site in question will be quite prominent due to its location close to the Hills and this will clearly increase the impact. Our view is that the lack of a 5-year land supply should not be seen to automatically outweigh AONB impacts as there are other sites in the District that could potentially meet that demand.</p>	<p>Withdrawn</p> <p>This site is outside the AONB boundary but there is clear intervisibility between the site and the Hills.</p>
<p>Outline application for residential development of up to 50 dwellings. All matters reserved except for access.</p> <p>Land At Lawn Farm, Drake Street, Welland, Worcestershire</p> <p>14/01269/OUT</p>	<p>Concerned about cumulative impacts with other developments on the setting of the AONB. Concerned about 3 key viewpoints where there are special views towards the ridge of the Malvern Hills. The scheme could be designed to maintain some views. Suggest structural tree planting to conform with existing character and to reduce impacts on views from the Hills. Recommended using dark colours for roofs and solar panels.</p>	<p>Refused</p> <p>The AONB was not one of the reasons for refusal. This is located just outside the AONB boundary, with the main concern being over cumulative impacts of several developments around Welland.</p>

<p>Outline application with all matters, except for access reserved, for residential development of up to 150 dwellings, (some affordable), (C3 Use Classes) and associated point of access (including demolition of No. 2 Hayslan Road, to facilitate vehicular access</p> <p>Land off Hayslan Road, Malvern, Worcestershire 14/01301/OUT</p>	<p>Whilst the proposed site is located outside the AONB boundary it clearly forms part of the setting of the Malvern Hills. The principal concerns from the AONB perspective are, therefore, with effects on views towards and from the AONB, and the ridge of the Hills in particular. On balance, the AONB Unit considers that this development would have a negative impact on views to and from the Malvern Hills. However, if the Council is minded to approve this outline application we would ask that a condition is applied requiring any future reserved matters application to include computer visualisations to illustrate the character and appearance of the development in views to and from the Malvern Hills.</p>	<p>Refused The AONB was not one of the reasons for refusal. This would be outside the AONB boundary but clearly within the setting of the Malvern Hills.</p>
<p>Outline application for a residential development of up to 95 houses (40% affordable) (with all matters reserved except for the access) and associated works</p> <p>Land At Upper Welland Road, Malvern, Worcestershire 14/01333/OUT</p>	<p>The Malvern Hills AONB Unit objects to this proposal as it has potential to cause significant harm to the local landscape and the wider AONB. The application fails to adequately recognise that this is a sensitive location, fails to apply relevant AONB policies, and fails to demonstrate that it would be a sustainable development. Both Sections 115 and 116 of the NPPF apply as this should be considered to be a major development in an AONB. In our view the development would not meet any of requirements of either of these sections. They have not provided convincing evidence of why exceptional circumstances exist (bearing in mind that the lack of a five year land supply is not such a circumstance) or why the scheme is in the public interest. The development is not consistent with local landscape character or visual appearance and is not sustainable.</p>	<p>Refused The AONB was a principal reason for refusal. It was considered to be a major development and contrary to sections 115 and 116 of the NPPF.</p>
<p>Site for a dwelling Land at Ochre Hill, Wellington Heath, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 1LZ 140811</p>	<p>This would be a small dwelling within the settlement boundary and in a location where it would be surrounded by mature trees. It is on the edge of the settlement where it could impact on the character and appearance of this part of the AONB by altering the pattern of open space and dwellings. It could set a precedent for further development in the area.</p>	<p>Refused The AONB location was part of the reason for refusal.</p>

<p>Proposed erection of a single wind turbine, with a maximum blade height of 77 metres, along with accompanying access track, crane hardstanding, substation and temporary construction compound Halfridge Farm, Pippins Hill, Acton Beauchamp, Worcester, Herefordshire, WR6 5AD 142059</p>	<p>Concerned about the impact of the turbine on views to and from the AONB. We would like to see more viewpoints assessed within the AONB, such as Suckley Hills, North Hill and British Camp. Views from adjacent bridleways towards the Hills would also be affected. The potential impacts on the AONB should be given great weight under the NPPF and this should weigh against the development. The Council will need to balance this with more local landscape impacts and potential social and economic benefits.</p>	<p>Refused The main reasons were impact on landscape character and the character, enjoyment and setting of the AONB. This is outside the AONB but has clear intervisibility with the Malvern Hills and Suckley Hills.</p>
<p>Proposed erection of 4 no. broiler rearing units, together with associated feed bins, hardstandings, access and attenuation ponds. Land at Grid reference 373972, 240094, Chances Pitch, Colwall, Malvern, WR13 6HP 143028</p>	<p>The AONB Unit objects to the proposed development as it would be contrary to both national and local planning policy and would cause significant harm to the landscape character and visual appearance of the AONB. We consider that this is a major development within the AONB and therefore Sections 115 and 116 of the NPPF should be applied. The landscape of the site is of high value although its local character and landscape resources are in declining condition as a result of intensive agriculture. This current decline results in the site and its resources being vulnerable to further effects from intensive farming and therefore any developments must be sensitive and bring appropriate landscape enhancement. The AONB Management Plan has clear policies relating to the restoration of landscapes and landscape features that have been degraded. The AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines explain how this can be achieved.</p>	<p>Withdrawn This is a significant development for the AONB. We were concerned about the quality of the landscape and visual impact assessment accompanying the application.</p>

<p>Proposed stables and manege Ciderstone Cottage, Harcourt Road, Mathon, Malvern, Herefordshire, WR13 5PG 143154</p>	<p>Question whether the proposed location is the most sensitive in terms of its impact on the landscape of the AONB. Referred to equestrian guidance relating to maneges being associated with existing buildings. Recommended the use of dark colours and additional hedgerow and tree planting to minimise the landscape impact.</p>	<p>Decision pending on 9th April 2015. Discussions have been held with the applicant to try to reach a compromise position.</p>
<p>Construction of solar park with attendant infrastructure including substations, replacement tower, centre station, inverters, cameras and fencing Land at Woodhall Farm, Wichenford, Worcestershire, WR6 6YE 14/01658/FUL</p>	<p>The main concern of the Malvern Hills AONB Unit was with the potential impact of the solar farm development outside the AONB on views from the Malvern Hills AONB, which includes both the main ridge of the Malvern Hills and the Suckley Hills. The AONB Unit's position was that in the absence of further information relating to potential landscape impacts it has a holding objection to the proposals. A glint and glare report was subsequently submitted by the applicant and the AONB Unit removed its objection as it appeared that the impact on views from the AONB would be very limited.</p>	<p>Decision pending on 9th April 2015.</p>
<p>Outline application for a residential development of up to 69 dwellings (some affordable) with all matters reserved except for access Land at Mayfield Road, Malvern, Worcestershire 14/01748/OUT</p>	<p>Whilst the proposed site is located outside the AONB boundary it clearly forms part of the setting of the Malvern Hills. The principal concerns from the AONB perspective are, therefore, with effects on views towards and from the AONB, and the ridge of the Hills in particular. In terms of views from the Hills, we are satisfied by the choice of viewpoints at North Hill and Worcestershire Beacon in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) as representative of views from the ridge of the Hills and lower down on North Hill. If the Council is minded to approve this outline application we would ask that a condition is applied requiring any future reserved matters application to include computer visualisations to illustrate the character and appearance of the development in views to and from the Malvern Hills.</p>	<p>Withdrawn</p>

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7. NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN THE MALVERN HILLS AONB – A LANDSCAPE BASED APPROACH

Background

1. Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011. The idea behind localism is that decision-making is passed to a more local level. Neighbourhood planning legislation came into effect in England in 2012.
2. A Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) or Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. A Neighbourhood Plan is about the use and development of land and may contain a vision, aims, planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, or allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development. It may deal with a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues such as housing, employment, heritage and transport or it may focus on one or two issues only.
3. A Neighbourhood Plan will be part of the statutory development plan for the area if it is approved at a referendum. This statutory status gives Neighbourhood Plans far more weight than some other local documents such as Parish Plans or Village Design Statements.

Summary

4. The Malvern Hills AONB Unit is currently working with three parishes which are developing Neighbourhood Plans in the AONB: Colwall and Cradley in Herefordshire and Welland in Worcestershire. Each of these communities approached the AONB Unit for help because they are keen to ensure that their Neighbourhood Plan helps to protect the environment which local people value so highly. The prospect of having strong Neighbourhood Plans which can work alongside the AONB Management Plan in helping to conserve and enhance the landscape is the basis for the Unit's active engagement in the process.
5. The exact nature of the AONB Unit's engagement in the NDP process varies. In all three cases the Unit is involved in the Working Groups which are spearheading this work at a local level. Unit staff have raised queries, made suggestions and contributed to discussions in the context of these groups, as well as attending public consultation events. In the case of Colwall we have also helped to draft

policies for inclusion in the NDP. However, our most significant involvement to date may be in advocating a landscape led approach to NDP work.

6. All Neighbourhood Plans must be in conformity with Local Plans produced by District or Unitary Authorities. Draft Local Plans all indicate that the three named parishes must accommodate housing growth. Therefore, the NDP for each parish must demonstrate that space has been allocated for sufficient residential development. Given that new housing development may not be greeted with open arms by local people, especially those who might live next to it, the question is how best to go about identifying development sites.
7. The AONB Unit has attempted to answer this question by working with the NDP Working Group in each parish to help commission, finance and manage a landscape assessment. The central theme of the assessment in all cases has been a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study. These studies involve an assessment of all potential development sites in and around a settled area. A number of criteria are considered when carrying out the assessment, including the visibility of a particular area in local and wider views, the condition and quality of the landscape within it, the function which it may serve, for example, in acting as a gateway to a settlement or in providing an important biodiversity resource. At the end of the assessment a map is produced which grades potential development sites on a scale, usually from very high to very low.
8. Of great importance is the fact that the landscape assessment is carried out by a qualified Landscape Architect who is independent of the locality and any parties involved. Whether people like them or not, or agree with them or not, the conclusions reached are transparent and based on professional opinion. The AONB Unit has found that this helps to take some of the local politics out of agreeing a way forward. It also feels like a better and more consensual way of determining where development should go, compared with the approach of the past where land owners interested in selling simply raise their hands, wherever they happened to be.
9. It should be stressed that the landscape led approach is not a panacea. Other social and economic issues need to be considered, including very practical ones such as drainage, willingness of land owners to sell etc. It may be that some sites identified as having a high capacity for development in an area cannot or will not come forward.

This may precipitate a move down the list to a site which has lower landscape capacity, but at least the assessment allows this to be done in a structured and systematic manner. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the landscape assessment led approach is becoming better known and may be followed by other parishes engaged in NDP development.

Recommendation

10. The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Comment on the above, in particular the landscape assessment led approach to Neighbourhood Planning.**
- 2) Consider and identify other parishes within the AONB which might be interested in this approach to Neighbourhood Planning.**

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8. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND 2014/5 – UPDATE REPORT

Background

1. The table below shows the Sustainable Development Fund's grants for the financial year 2014/15. The expenditure was £28,269. Taking out of that a 10% administration charge, £25,532 was distributed in grants as outlined below.

Summary

Applicant	Project	Grant
Colwall Orchard Group	Composting loo – a 'long drop' on stilts that lets schools visit Colwall Village Gardens.	£1063
Malvern Hills District Council	Malvern Munch – Local Food Walk around the Malverns.	£2,000
Colwall Car Club	Provision of a second hand car into West Malvern.	£2,235
Malvern Community Forest	Creation of green exercise space.	£2,000
Malvern Hills Conservators	Hill Bat Survey – provision of detectors for volunteers, and survey of bats.	£1,890
Eastnor Estate	Restoration of Clencher's Mill.	£5,500
Site Designs	Dog poo digester – a new look at how to deal with dog fouling on the hills by generating gas from fermenting it.	£5,170
Colwall Village Society	Bygone Colwall Booklet	£500
H&W Earth Heritage Trust	Conservation by volunteers of geosites within the AONB.	£2,967
Malvern Hills Food Alliance	Survey to connect local food suppliers to caterers.	£1,350
Colwall Car Club	Contribution to a new electric bike.	£850
Malvern Outdoor Elements	Contribution to restoration of boardwalks and ponds.	
Total		£25,532

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

- 1) Note and comment on the report.**
- 2) Contact David Armitage with any projects that might be suitable for this fund.**

Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

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9. INFORMATION ITEMS

Management Plan ref.
(abridged)

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

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

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

Project

Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project – work is now well underway. Preliminary visits to many of the year 1 orchards have now been undertaken and the first volunteer training session has been held. Service Level Agreements have been signed with the three 'hubs' helping to deliver the project and a Project Board has been put in place.

Making Space for Nature – Herefordshire Biological Records Centre has undertaken some pilot work to interrogate known habitat data sets, to determine how effectively these can be matched to species data in the area.

Dormice Survey Work

Dormice are an important and rare species on the Malvern Hills. In partnership with the Malvern Hills Conservators, the AONB has contributed £235 towards some dormice boxes for use in the West Malvern area. The data on species density and distribution will help inform the management of the woodlands in West Malvern.

Neighbourhood Plans – the AONB Unit continues to work with members of Colwall Parish Council to support the development of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Burying overhead electricity cable – Work has been completed on 6 sites at Eastnor, Wellington Heath, Colwall and Mathon. The exact length of cable buried and costs have yet to be provided by Western Power Distribution; however they are to be congratulated on making such a difference to the views in the area.

April 2015 sees the end of this spending review period. The next period will also be looking for other suitable sites within the Malvern Hills AONB to bury cables.

If JAC members know of any lengths of overhead cable they

think might be candidates for the scheme, do contact David Armitage. They could be included in the next programme.

Landscape Improvement Grants - these small grants are aimed at landowners who fall outside the ambit of larger grant systems. £1,244 has been committed to hedge planting projects in the parishes of Castlemorton and Cradley.

Three Counties Showground Landscape Enhancements – a variety of works have been carried out in recent months, including reinstating an old hedge line, grafting Perry Pear trees and replacing gates.

Giving Veteran Trees Breathing/Breeding Space

Following work with the Woodland Trust who surveyed the area, a grant of £1500 was provided to Mathon Court to clear young trees away from veteran oaks. Following this, the owner has gone on to clear around yet more ancient tree. Any JAC members with knowledge of such swamped veteran trees or ancient woods should contact David Armitage.

Knapp and Papermill: silvicultural work.

The Knapp and Papermill is a nature reserve owned by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Within it lie many woodlands that need to be managed. The AONB has contributed £3,300 towards a c.£30,000 silvicultural management project that will continue there over 2015

Revamping the Electronic Communications

The website has now been migrated to a php platform which means that it can be much more easily edited, kept up to date and hopefully, more interesting.

We also continue to update our Facebook on a weekly basis.

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

IP5 – Raising awareness of 'being in the Malvern Hills' as a special place to encourage sustainable activity.