

**Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan (2019-2024)  
Revision Draft to JAC – November 2018**

Prepared under the Countryside and Rights of Way (Crow) Act 2000, on behalf of:

Forest of Dean District Council,  
Gloucestershire County Council,  
Herefordshire Council,  
Malvern Hills District Council and  
Worcestershire County Council

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## **Ministerial Foreword**

*(Awaiting text)*

## **Chairman's Foreword**

*(Awaiting text)*

## 1. Introduction

### About Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

#### What is an AONB?

- 1.1. Together with National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) represent the country's most outstanding landscapes; unique and irreplaceable national assets, each with distinctive character and natural beauty. They are part of the international protected area family. As cultural landscapes, produced through the interaction of humans with nature over time, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature recognises them as 'Category V - Protected Landscapes'<sup>1</sup>. Their management is to be in the interest of everyone – local residents, businesses, visitors, and the wider public - and protected for future generations.
- 1.2. There are 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, covering approximately 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the land surface. The distinctive character and natural beauty of AONBs make them some of our most special and cherished places. They are living, working landscapes that contribute some £16bn every year to the national economy<sup>2</sup>.

#### The purpose of AONB designation

- 1.3. The primary purpose of AONB designation is 'to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area'<sup>3</sup>.

'In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of economic and social development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> IUCN NCUK, *Putting Nature on the Map: Identifying Protected Areas in the UK - A Handbook to help identify protected areas in the UK and assign the IUCN Management Categories and Governance Types to them*. London: IUCN National Committee for the United Kingdom 2012, February. [www.iucn-uk.org/Portals/0/PNOTM%20Final%20January.pdf](http://www.iucn-uk.org/Portals/0/PNOTM%20Final%20January.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> NAAONB, *What Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty can offer the LEAs*. Fairford, Glos: National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 2017. Available on <https://www.lepnetwork.net/blog/why-aonbs-are-important-to-the-leps/>

<sup>3</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 82

<sup>4</sup> Countryside Commission Policy Statement on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 1991

### ***What is natural beauty?***

The term 'natural beauty' is enshrined in the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. The natural beauty of an AONB is to do with the relationship between people and place. It encompasses everything - 'natural' and human - that makes an area distinctive<sup>5</sup>.

Government guidance relating to AONBs provides a useful non-technical definition: “Natural Beauty” is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries<sup>6</sup>. More recently, the government clarified that land is not prevented from being treated as of natural beauty by the fact that it is used for agriculture, woodlands or as a park; or because its physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape<sup>7</sup>.

## **About the Management Plan**

### **What is an AONB management plan?**

- 1.4. The purpose of a management plan is to help all those involved in managing the AONB to:
  - conserve its special qualities;
  - manage the pressures on these qualities; and
  - where possible, improve the AONB for current and future generations of people who live in and visit the area.
- 1.5. A management plan provides guidance to everyone with an interest in an AONB. That includes all those organisations and individuals who manage or have an influence over land in the area, as well as those who live, work and relax there.

### **Who is responsible for the AONB management plan?**

- 1.6. Local authorities with an AONB in their area must prepare and publish a management plan, and review that plan at least every five years. The plan formulates local authority policy for the management of the AONB and for the carrying out of local authority functions in relation to that policy<sup>8</sup>. All public bodies have a statutory duty to ‘have regard’ to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of an AONB<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Holdaway, E., *Origins and intentions of 1949 Act: Natural Beauty*. Bangor: Countryside Council for Wales 2007; Selman, P. and C. Swanwick, "On the Meaning of Natural Beauty in Landscape Legislation ". *Landscape Research*. **35** (1): p. 3-26 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A guide for AONB Partnership members, Countryside Commission, CA24, November 2001, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006: Section 99

<sup>8</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 89

<sup>9</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 85

- 1.7. Legal duties aside, the management plan is for the whole of the AONB and its implementation is in the hands of all those with an interest in the area, especially its communities and landowners. A Malvern Hills AONB Partnership exists to bring people together and encourage a strong sense of ‘ownership’ to care for the area. Its membership is wide-ranging.
- 1.8. The AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) is the strategic arm of the Partnership. This Committee is made up of representatives of government agencies, local authorities, public bodies and a range of non-governmental organisations. The JAC has a formal role to play in overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the management plan.
- 1.9. This management plan takes account of the views of local people, as well as a range of public, private and voluntary sector bodies. In draft form, the plan was subject to wide-ranging public consultation and to assessments under European directives. The AONB JAC endorses this plan and relevant local authorities have formally adopted it. It is published with the assistance of a range of partners. The JAC will keep the Management Plan under review.

This Management Plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Appropriate Assessment and supporting documents (including a record of the consultation process) are all available on the Malvern Hills AONB website:

[http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/managing\\_the\\_aonb.html](http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/managing_the_aonb.html)

You can make enquiries about these documents to the Malvern Hills AONB team through the website or by telephone: 01684 560616.

### **How does the management plan fit with the policies and plans of others?**

- 1.10. European, national and local policies and plans already provide a considerable level of protection for the natural and scenic beauty of the AONB. In addition, many other issues that affect the area – such as the management of transport, tourism, recreation, geodiversity and biodiversity – are dealt with in individual strategies and plans prepared by a wide range of partner organisations.
- 1.11. The intention is that the AONB management plan is informed by these policies, plans and strategies and is implemented alongside and in conjunction with them. However, in focussing on the AONB designation and the statutory purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty it is also expected that this management plan will influence the preparation and delivery of key policies, plans, processes and decisions affecting the area. This would cover, for example, Local Plans, Neighbourhood Development Plans, Local Transport Plans and Green Infrastructure Strategies.

Defra is considering whether there is scope for the current network of AONBs and National Parks in

England to expand, in either size or number. It will report on the options for improving access to these landscapes, and on the support needed by those who live and work in them. It will also explore the role these designations have in growing the rural economy.

The review will report in 2019. This is after the adoption and publication of this Management Plan; there may be a need to reassess our policy positions in the light of the review's findings.

- 1.12. The **Malvern Hills Trust** is a major partner in the AONB partnership. Established in 1884 under the Malvern Hills Act, the Trust is one of the oldest conservation bodies in the UK. The Malvern Hills Acts were set up to protect the Malvern Hills lands, the rights of commoners and to establish a right of access for the public. The role of the Trust is separate from, but complementary to, that of the AONB Partnership. The Trust controls 11% of the land in the AONB. It publishes a management plan for its land. This is a significant document for the AONB and its management.

### **Which common issues run throughout the management plan?**

- 1.13. A number of crosscutting issues are central to this management plan and to its implementation.

#### ***Sustainability***

- 1.14. Sustainability is about making sure that our actions today do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There is a need to protect the natural capital (see below) that supports economic prosperity and human well-being. We need to stimulate resource-efficient, low-carbon economic and social development. There is also a need to safeguard people from environmental health risks. Management of the AONB should take full account not only of the environment but also of social and economic issues. This will ensure that any potential impacts conserve and enhance, rather than compromise, these vital resources<sup>10</sup>.

#### ***The exit from the European Union and rural land management***

- 1.15. Landscape elements within the AONB, such as hedgerows, field size, woodlands and tree cover, are influenced as much by human activities as they are by nature. The land use practices that helped create these elements have changed dramatically over the years, particularly in farming. The decision to leave the EU will have major ramifications for agricultural trade in the UK, which could affect the management of much of the AONB's farmland and hence the wildlife and landscapes that depend on it. Defra has made it clear that in future, 'public money for public goods' will be the basis for financial contributions to farming<sup>11</sup>. So public money will be for conservation and environmental gains that benefit the public at large. The changes brought about by the UK's departure from the EU will not happen overnight. Defra proposes an 'agricultural transition period' during which some funds will be withdrawn from existing support mechanisms and in order to fund pilot projects that,

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<sup>10</sup> European Environment Agency The European Environment State and Outlook 2015

<sup>11</sup> See Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit, Cmd paper 9577, HMSO, February 2018

for example, restore healthy soils, improve air quality, provide clean water, and enable the countryside to teem with wildlife.

- 1.16. There is perhaps a greater opportunity than ever to pursue an integrated approach to sustainable land management. By working in partnership, it is possible to develop a more environmentally responsible approach to land use; and reverse the decline in the environmental quality of our land and rivers. As the exit from the European Union will be after the publication of this Management Plan, there may be a need to reassess the policy positions once the new trading position is known.

### ***Climate change***

- 1.17. Because of increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, global warming is now a serious consideration for all policy makers. There is an emerging consensus on the long-term effects of climate change<sup>12</sup>; weather patterns are likely to change and average temperatures will rise.
- 1.18. In the Malvern Hills area, a long-running local weather station provides good data about the nature and pace of change. The wettest year since recording began in 1889 is 1924 (1,083 mm) and the driest is 1921 (469 mm). In spite of recent concerns over a possible trend to more extreme rainfall, the data does not confirm this. Temperatures have shown trends that are more definite. The average annual temperature is now about 1.3° C higher than a hundred years ago. However, the warming has not been gradual. There was a warming trend from 1921 to 1937, cooling from 1938 to 1965, warming from 1966 to 2006 and recently another cooling<sup>13</sup>.
- 1.19. Long-term changes in climate could radically alter the natural environment of the AONB. If the earth is warmer and contains more CO<sub>2</sub>, plants will thrive, allowing more greening and faster growth for trees and plants. Habitats and species currently sited at the edge of their range will either have to move or dwindle. Conditions may become more favourable for invasive species and diseases that then impact on core elements of the landscape, such as trees. Management of the AONB must help to address these changes by helping to reduce carbon emissions through mitigation and by supporting environmental adaptations to make the area more resilient to changing conditions.

### ***Benefits from the natural and cultural environment***

- 1.20. The Natural Capital Committee is an independent body that provides advice to the government on the sustainable use of natural capital (our natural assets). These assets are the stock of renewable and non-renewable resources that combine to yield a flow of benefits to people. The services that flow from this stock of resources

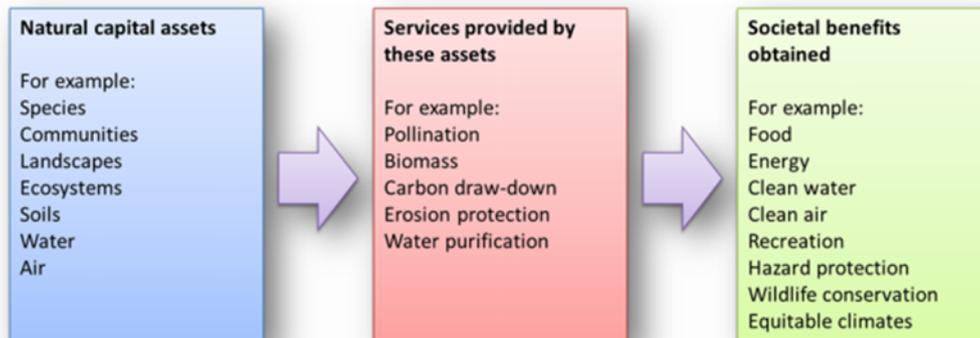
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<sup>12</sup> see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change-explained>

<sup>13</sup> Ian Duncan, Peter Garner and Peter Creed (2018), *Nature of the Malverns, an ancient landscape steeped in wildlife*, NatureBureau, Newbury - ISBN: 978-1-874357-83-4

are known as ecosystem and abiotic services. These give benefits that have a value to businesses and society<sup>14</sup>. The chart below shows the relationship between natural capital assets, the services they provide and the benefits to society.

Relationship between the stock of natural capital assets, the services they provide and the benefits to society



Taken from The Natural Capital Committee, 'How to do it: a natural capital workbook', April 2017

- 1.21. The Malvern Hills AONB provides a wide range of benefits to society. These derive from the attributes and processes (both natural and cultural) within the area. They include clean air and water, food, renewable fuel, carbon storage, a sense of belonging and other services vital to our health and well-being. In December 2017 the AONB Partnership published a report which identifies specific Natural Capital assets in the area and provides an indication of their relative importance. For example, it shows that woodlands and traditional orchards deliver significant benefits against a broad range of ecosystem services.<sup>15</sup> The AONB Partnership recognises the importance of these services. They should be used and managed within boundaries that allow the resource to renew itself.
- 1.22. A healthy natural environment is a cost-effective tool that helps local authorities and other partners to:
- support economic and social regeneration,
  - improve public health,
  - improve educational outcomes,
  - reduce crime and antisocial behaviour,
  - help communities adapt to climate change; and
  - improve quality of life across an entire area.
- 1.23. Celebrating the cultural environment enriches peoples' lives. It is a source of pride and identity; it provides a deep emotional connection, it is a focus for shared

<sup>14</sup> Natural Capital Coalition. 2016. "Natural Capital Protocol". (Online) Available at: [www.naturalcapitalcoalition.org/protocol](http://www.naturalcapitalcoalition.org/protocol)

<sup>15</sup> Hölzinger, O. (2017): *Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Natural Capital Scoping Study*. Malvern Hills AONB Partnership, Worcester. (Online) Available at: <http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk>

experiences. Understanding our heritage helps society make sense of our place in the world. It helps create a sense of familiarity and belonging, bringing communities together and connecting us to our shared past, in all its diversity<sup>16</sup>.

- 1.24. There is a need to consider the value of these ecosystem services when taking actions that affect the AONB. This must include the future costs arising from any increase in environmental risks. The Natural Capital Planning Tool (NCPT) is a free site assessment tool developed specifically for the planning context<sup>17</sup>. The NCPT allows the indicative but systematic assessment of the likely impact of proposed plans and developments on Natural Capital and the ecosystem services it provides. This tool can support a monitoring programme. Table 1 lists the principal components of the ecosystem services provided by the area.

**Table 1: Components of the AONB’s ecosystem services<sup>18</sup>**

<b>Provisioning services</b> <i>The products obtained from nature</i>	<b>Regulating services</b> <i>The benefits obtained from the regulation of natural processes</i>	<b>Cultural services</b> <i>The non-material benefits people obtain from nature</i>	<b>Supporting services</b> <i>The services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services</i>
Biomass energy Food production Genetic diversity Timber production Water availability	Pollination Regulating air quality Regulating climate and carbon storage Regulating soil erosion Regulation soil quality Regulating water flow and flooding Regulating water quality	Education Health and well-being Recreation Sense of history Sense of place and inspiration Tranquillity	Biodiversity and geodiversity Nutrient cycling Primary production such as photosynthesis Soil formation Water cycling

**Lack of resources**

- 1.25. Resources for non-statutory work are in short supply and likely to remain so for some time. The value of working in partnership is greater than ever. Partners need to think carefully about how they might use their own resources to achieve the management plan’s objectives. There is a need to adapt to new priorities by being innovative and flexible.

To address these common issues, the management plan will aim to:

- Conserve the area’s natural capital.

<sup>16</sup> Historic England (2018), *Heritage and Society*, a part of the Heritage Counts Series 2018 on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum. Project Code: 52105

<sup>17</sup> www.NCPTool.com.

<sup>18</sup> After Hölzinger, O. (2017)

- Safeguard people from environmental health risks.
- Stimulate appropriate resource-efficient, low-carbon economic and social development.
- Reduce carbon emissions.
- Pursue an integrated approach to sustainable land management.
- Support effective partnership working.

### **How is the management plan structured?**

- 1.26. The management plan is presented in three main sections, which cover:
- the natural and cultural environment,
  - community life, and
  - enjoying and understanding.
- 1.27. The Partnership wishes to enhance the benefits the AONB provides for society. Each section begins with a vision of what the AONB will be like in 20 years time. It then sets out a number of chapters on separate but related themes. The chapters all include the following elements:
- background information;
  - special features – the physical elements of the landscape and any specific attributes that help define the special qualities;
  - key issues – the issues and threats to these special features;
  - objectives – what must be achieved in order to make progress towards the vision;
  - policies – how the objectives will be achieved;
  - examples of actions that will help meet the objectives.
- 1.28. Each objective and policy has a reference number. The numbers are used within the text to illustrate links between key issues and specific objectives and policies.

## **The Malvern Hills AONB**

*Map to be added on publication*

**Designation of the Malvern Hills AONB** - The Malvern Hills Area was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1959. Detailed information on the designation history is available on the Malvern Hills AONB website: <http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/about-the-aonb/aonb-designation-and-purpose/>

### **Malvern Hills AONB**

- 1.29. Designation of the Malvern Hills AONB was in 1959. A desire to protect the setting of the Malvern Hills was a strong influence in the call for designation. The AONB covers 105 square kilometres and includes parts of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. The special quality of the Malvern Hills lies in the contrasts. The

distinctive, narrow, north-south ridge, a mountain range in miniature, thrusts unexpectedly from the pastoral farmland patchwork of the Severn Vale. The highest point is Worcestershire Beacon (425m) and walkers along the ridge crest enjoy views as far as Wales and the Cotswolds. The geological variety, and thousands of years of traditional farming have given the AONB great ecological value. Herb-rich, unimproved pastures and native woodland support a wealth of habitats, species and wildlife. In addition, a historical landscape, the ridge is crowned by two ancient hill forts, the most famous being the ditches and ramparts of British Camp.

- 1.30. This is an area of pastoral farming, with dairying and stock-rearing, plus fruit growing, mixed crops and forestry. Large areas are grazed as ancient commons. The AONB has a population of approximately 13,000 and villages such as Malvern Wells have experienced considerable growth in their retired population and in workers commuting to Birmingham and Worcester. The towns of Great Malvern and Ledbury fringe the AONB and the rural economy includes light manufacturing and prestige office development together with the important conference and tourism sector. Tourists have flocked here to 'take the waters' since the early 1800s and Great Malvern's formal paths and rides give the nearby slopes the air of a Victorian pleasure garden. The ridge and hillside paths and the commons are traditional 'day trip' country. The Worcestershire Way footpath is an important new recreation resource in the AONB.

### **The special qualities of the Malvern Hills AONB**

- The Malvern Hills: a high, dramatic ridge of ancient rock that is visible from the Severn Vale and from the rolling hills and valleys to the west.
- Dramatic scenery and spectacular views arising from the juxtaposition of high and low ground.
- A distinctive and varied geology, with a variety of different rock types including granites, diorites, volcanic lavas, limestones, sandstones, mudstones and shales. This gives rise to a unique array of landscapes and natural habitats.
- A wide variety of landscape types in a relatively small area. Assessments of the area's landscape character identify ten distinct landscape types. Woodland and grassland in varying mixes are the most prevalent.
- A distinctive combination of landscape elements that include orchards, parklands, ridgelines, ponds, quarries, hedgerows and watercourses.
- An unspoiled 'natural' environment supporting a wide variety of wildlife habitats and species, many of which are nationally rare.
- An historic landscape of ancient unenclosed commons, varied field boundary patterns and designed parks and gardens.

- A rich and distinctive historic environment including Bronze Age burial grounds, Iron Age hill forts, moated sites and industrial architecture.
- Distinctive villagescapes, including conservation areas, listed buildings and local features that define a ‘spirit of place’ in the settlements.
- Thriving and active communities with a low deprivation index that reflects the area’s prosperity and the availability of employment.
- A history of recreation and tourism that continues today, with people coming to enjoy the hills, spas and the tranquillity of the rural landscapes.
- A sense of remoteness and tranquillity, underpinned by dark night skies and limited noise and disturbance. People feel calm and spiritually refreshed.
- A strong ‘spirit of place’, landscapes that have inspired and continue to inspire and which have a deep cultural narrative.
- Open access in many places over the hills and commons, providing opportunities for bracing walks with fine views.

### **The significance of the setting of the AONB**

- 1.31. Since 2012, Defra and Natural England advise those carrying out management plan reviews to consider the effect of development in the setting of protected landscapes. Despite this, the area of land approved for housing in the setting of the English AONBs increased nine-fold between 2012 and 2017, with 60% of this on greenfield land<sup>19</sup>.
- 1.32. It is common to express the extent and importance of setting in terms of views and vistas. Views are a crucial component of setting, being associated with the visual experience and aesthetic appreciation of the wider landscape. Views are particularly important in the Malvern Hills AONB. This is because of the juxtaposition of high and low ground and the fact that recreational users value them highly. Without careful management and planning, views and the broader setting of the AONB may be lost or degraded. Although views of or from the Malvern Hills do play an important part, the way people experience the AONB in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors; by spatial associations; and by their understanding of the cultural relationship between sites and places<sup>20</sup>.
- 1.33. Construction of a distant but high structure and any development or change generating movement, noise, odour, artificial light, vibration or dust over a wide area can reduce the biodiversity and degrade the sense of remoteness and tranquillity found in the AONB. This would diminish the area’s special qualities.

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<sup>19</sup> CPRE (2017) Beauty betrayed: how reckless housing development threatens England’s AONBs

<sup>20</sup> Adapted from: ‘The Setting of Heritage Assets’, English Heritage 2011 (revised 2012).

1.34. The extent of the setting is not fixed and is likely to vary depending on issues being considered. A new understanding of the relationship between neighbouring landscapes may extend the setting<sup>21</sup>. If the quality of the setting declines, then the appreciation and enjoyment of the AONB diminishes. There may even be a detrimental effect on the purposes for which the area has been designated or the special qualities that define it. Section 85 of the CRoW Act requires public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the AONB may *affect* land within it<sup>22</sup>.

## Monitoring

1.35. Two aspects of monitoring are relevant to this plan:

- Performance monitoring – performance monitoring will occur by assessing the success of the AONB Partnership in implementing actions an annual action plan. This will be documented in an Annual Review produced each summer.
- Condition monitoring – this is about the state of the land itself. In 2008, a core suite of indicators was selected to measure change in the condition of the key attributes of the area. These include its landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and built heritage. Information on these indicators is used to produce a full State of the Malvern Hills AONB report once every five years. Some new indicators will be adopted for monitoring purposes as and when improved data becomes available and to reflect changing priorities, for example, in relation to Natural Capital. In particular, there is a need to improve the monitoring of undesignated heritage assets. Most of the indicators are quantitative but there are opportunities to develop qualitative measures too. Implementation of the AONB management plan is intended to improve the condition of the AONB. Condition monitoring will be used to assess whether the management plan has succeeded or failed. Results from condition monitoring activities will also be used to inform future strategies, plans and management activity.

1.36. The table 2 lists the core condition monitoring indicators<sup>23</sup>.

<b>Table 2: Core Indicators</b>		
<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Indicative of</b>
Landscape	Fixed point photography	Landscape change

<sup>21</sup> The National Planning Policy Framework 2018.

<sup>22</sup> The South Worcestershire Councils have commissioned a landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study to help inform future development in the area and this will contribute to our understanding of setting around Malvern and other close by settlements on the Worcestershire side.

<sup>23</sup> This list is subject to amendment based on the availability of data. This may include the selection of additional indicators. Opportunities will be taken to create local sources of consistent data, including using crowd-sourcing.

Landscape	Agricultural change: i. Farm type ii. Type of land use iii. Area under agri-environmental schemes	Landscape change, changes in agricultural activity and interest in land stewardship
Geology	Number and condition of Local Geological Sites	Quantity and quality of management of geological
Biodiversity	Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Health of biodiversity on special sites
Historic and built environment	Condition of Scheduled Monuments	Health of the nationally important built heritage
Historic and built environment	Condition of listed buildings, parks and gardens	Health of the nationally important built heritage
Tranquillity	CPRE Tranquillity Index	Changes in perceived levels of tranquillity in the area
Enjoyment	Ease of use of rights of way	Accessibility of the access network

### State of the AONB Report in 2018/19

- 1.37. Table 3 provides a summary of the condition of the Malvern Hills AONB in 2018/19. This condition assessment is based on a range of headline indicators, with information derived from both local and national data sets. For a more detailed assessment and commentary, please see the Malvern Hills AONB State of the AONB report 2018. [http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/condition\\_monitoring.html](http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/condition_monitoring.html).
- 1.38. Data relating to the condition of the AONB and trends in condition have been used to inform the policies and actions contained within the Management Plan.

Special qualities of the Malvern Hills AONB	Headline indicator (2018)	Equivalent results for 2013 (where available)	Condition trend	Level for comparison (national where available)
Landscape	10% of AONB fixed photographic monitoring points showing evidence of landscape enhancement	13%	Slightly declining	
Farmed landscape	46.7% of the agricultural area is actively managed under the Environmental/Countryside Stewardship scheme	82%	Declining	
Woodlands	55% of woodland is 'actively managed' <sup>24</sup>	53%	Slightly improving	

<sup>24</sup> Based on 2016 data

Biodiversity	99.8% of the area of all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering' condition.	99.7%	Stable at almost maximum level	
Biodiversity	95.8% of water courses by length are of moderate quality. <sup>25</sup> 4.2% are of poor water quality.	84.4%	Improving	
		15.6%	Improving	
Geodiversity	% of earth heritage Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are in favourable or 'unfavourable recovering' condition.	100%	Stable at maximum level	
Geodiversity	83.3% of Local Geological Sites are in desirable condition	61.5%	Improving	
Built heritage	100% of Scheduled Ancient Monuments in satisfactory condition	100%	Stable at maximum level	
Built heritage	90.4% of listed buildings are in good or fair condition	91.9%	Slightly declining	
Tranquillity	49.1% of AONB is of high or very high tranquillity	All data are from 2006	Unknown	
Tranquillity	13.3% of AONB is of low or very low tranquillity	All data are from 2006	Unknown	
Tranquillity	20.1 - 20.4 mCd/m2 Maximum night sky brightness	No comparative data	Unknown	
Enjoyment	X% of public rights of way easy to use <sup>26</sup>	77.4%		

<sup>25</sup> Based on 2016 data.

<sup>26</sup> Data collection scheduled for October 2018

## 2. The natural and cultural environment

### Introduction

- 2.1. The AONB is of international importance, recognised as a 'Category V Protected Landscape' by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)<sup>27</sup>. In 2013, the IUCN UK Committee reaffirmed the Category V status of all AONBs, confirming the significant impact they have on conserving the UK's biodiversity. The IUCN define a Category V Protected Landscape as "An area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity".
- 2.2. Landscape sets a context for peoples' lives. It is a meeting-ground between the past and the present as well as between both natural and cultural influences. The Malvern Hills AONB is a landscape of great physical, ecological and historical diversity. From the open grasslands of the northern Malvern Hills with their magnificent views, to the mosaics of pasture, woodland and scattered settlements. This diversity of form, habitats and built heritage has a very special quality.
- 2.3. Geology underpins the area's natural beauty. For such a small area, the AONB has a notable geodiversity resource including classic geological formations and sites. This is recognised nationally with the designation of some geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and locally with the creation of the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark by a partnership including all the local geo-conservation groups, and development of the Geopark Way by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust. The interplay between humans and geology is much more complex than many people realise – geology underpins many of the everyday things that we take for granted. Building with locally available materials reflects local custom and tradition. Such vernacular buildings are a conspicuous and much-loved component of the landscape. The varied geology gives rise to a diversity of soil types that, in turn, underlie a range of wildlife habitats.
- 2.4. The AONB is remarkable for its wildlife habitats. They are as diverse as acidic and lowland limestone grasslands and mixed broadleaved woodlands. Traditional standard orchards, historic parkland and veteran trees, together with ponds, streams and marshes, add to the variety. Several habitats are nationally rare and some receive protection as SSSIs.
- 2.5. The historic environment of the AONB is an essential part of its distinctive character. It is the legacy of thousands of years of human activity and culture in complex layers,

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<sup>27</sup> Dudley, N (Editor) (2008) Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. X + 86pp. <http://data.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/PAPS-016.pdf>

and the rich and diverse historical record, that contributes significantly to the area's landscape, sense of place and identity.

- 2.6. Farming, forestry and hunting for game are the most important uses of the land over thousands of years; these have shaped and influenced the unique character of the Malvern Hills AONB. Traditionally, these activities have been the economic bedrock of the rural communities. They still support livelihoods and provide local foods and products.
- 2.7. These components of the AONB – the landscape, geology, biodiversity and historic environment – and the forces that have moulded and changed their form over thousands of years, have a strong inter-dependence. Many of the elements of the landscape are determined by their geology and have an inherent wildlife importance and/or historic significance.
- 2.8. For example, nutrient-poor soils derived from gravels eroded from the Malvern Hills underpin the unenclosed commons in the east of the AONB. The poor soils helped to ensure that the commons escaped agricultural enclosure. As a result, these areas have been managed in the same way for hundreds of years. They are largely unimproved and are therefore of great value for wildlife. They are also important historical features of the landscape – a living testament to traditional agricultural practices and a distinctive way of life.
- 2.9. The following chapters consider these resources and their management under separate themes:
  - landscape,
  - geodiversity,
  - biodiversity,
  - historic environment, and
  - farming and forestry.
- 2.10. It is commonly recognised that land management and the solutions to problems on the ground must be integrated. The European Landscape Convention<sup>28</sup> encourages a joined-up approach in all areas of land use, development and management. Similarly, Natural England's National Character Area profile for the area (NCA 103) identifies opportunities for positive and broad-based environmental change. Many of the policies identified in this management plan follow a common approach. They recognise the importance of the distinctive character of the AONB while accepting change. They pursue land management practices that protect and enhance the environment while supporting the socio-economic needs of local people and the role and importance of ecosystem services. Landscapes have undergone, often dramatic, change in the past. Yet they continue to provide a wide range of ecosystem services.

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<sup>28</sup> European Landscape Convention - Instrument of Ratification - Miscellaneous No. 4 (2006) Cm 6794; represented as Cm 8413 (2012) <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm84/8413/8413.pdf>

## **A vision for 2040**

### **Landscape**

- Interlocking, native broadleaved woodlands dominate the limestone ridges and valleys to the north and west.
- The pattern of medieval settlement and parkland west of the central and southern hills is sustained and reinforced.
- The framework of regular, enclosed commons in the east is maintained, with open farmland clearly divided by interlocking, healthy native hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland.
- The grasslands of the high north-south granite ridge are kept open, grazed and predominantly free of scrub.
- Change in the landscape is accepted and its impacts accommodated through positive management. However, the landscape largely comprises broadleaved woodland and grassland, interconnected with hedgerows and hedgerow trees, all in good condition.

### **Natural environment**

- Ancient rock formations are preserved, accessible and well-managed.
- Wildlife thrives in the grasslands on the open hills, bracken slopes, commons and meadows.
- Ancient, native and semi-natural woodlands are managed sustainably and yield economic and public benefits and a flourishing biodiversity.
- Native hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide a widespread network of high quality corridors.
- Traditional orchards, veteran and field trees are important elements of the landscape.
- Streams, brooks and ponds are well-managed and host a diversity of native flora and fauna.
- All recognised key habitats are well-linked and join to provide extensive ecological networks, both within the AONB and with the landscapes beyond.

### **Historic environment**

- There is a rich, accessible and vividly illustrated record of the historic environment.
- Field patterns, monuments, historic parklands and buildings and their settings are well-conserved in the landscape.
- The distinctive character of villages, historic farmsteads and rural buildings is sustained by high standards of informed design and development.
- Distinctive heritage assets such as limekilns, hill forts, the shire ditch, castles and moats are conserved, understood and enjoyed by residents and visitors.
- A myriad of old signs; wells and milestones enrich the country lanes.

### **Farming and forestry**

- There is a profitable and buoyant farm economy that supports the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty.
- High-quality local produce such as venison, cider and lamb helps to sustain

small-scale mixed farm traditions.

- The woodland estate can yield a constant supply of timber products that supports the local economy in a variety of ways.
- Farmers, foresters and other land managers are actively engaged in conserving and restoring the area's special qualities.

## Landscape

### Background

- 2.11. The key landscape characteristics of each part of the AONB are well documented. The Malvern Hills AONB Partnership has produced a Landscape Strategy and Guidelines specific to the ten landscape character types within the AONB. Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) have been prepared for each of the three counties of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. These provide an objective and comprehensive description of the landscape.
- 2.12. Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) assessments have been prepared for each of the three counties. These assessments provide a framework for describing and understanding how successive cultures have left their mark on the modern AONB landscape. The HLCs form a basis for further studies, such as detailed assessments of settlement patterns. They also give recognition in the planning system and in other land management processes to those distinctive landscape areas and features that are not statutorily protected.
- 2.13. LCAs and HLCs play a critical role in helping to inform policy making and land management activities. They also guide the development control process so that it reflects and strengthens the essential landscape character of the AONB. Achieving greater integration between these two tools will promote even better understanding. The AONB Landscape Strategy draws from many different subject areas. It will help decision makers to deliver a more cohesive approach to land management within the area.
- 2.14. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) encourages governments to identify and assess landscape types, with the active participation of communities, and to draw up programmes for their protection and management. The ELC defines landscape as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. It encourages a joined up approach in all areas of land use, development and management, including the recognition of landscape in law.
- 2.15. Change in the landscape is inevitable, whether because of development or natural causes, such as Chalara dieback of ash.

## Special features

- The prominent steeply sloping principal ridge contrasting with the flat land to the east and south and the gently undulating hills to the west and north.
- Extensive areas of acid grassland and heath on the hill tops, with rough grazing.
- Mixed broadleaved woodland often of ancient origin and relatively small in size, on the lower hills and valleys in the north and west.
- Orchards, including traditional orchards in parishes such as Colwall, Alfrick and Suckley.
- Fields bordered by hedgerows and often containing hedgerow trees.
- Fields of pasture, especially those that are unimproved and semi-improved.
- Mature and veteran trees in arable and pastoral fields and in hedgerows
- Formalised, enclosed commons in the east with regular hedgerow boundaries.
- Unenclosed commons to the south east with a strong sense of wildness.
- Arable fields to the south with regular hedged boundaries and straight roads.
- Scattered settlements and small wayside cottages, particularly by the commons.

## Key issues

- 2.16. Data published by Natural England in 2006 found that the essentially strong character of the area was maintained between 1999 and 2003<sup>29</sup>. In 2017, the AONB Partnership published a review of landscape change between 2006 and 2016 based on an analysis of photographs taken from 27 fixed points.<sup>30</sup> As might be anticipated over such a short period, changes to the AONB landscape were found to have been small and incremental, but nevertheless significant. In many cases, change is demonstrated not to be a linear process. Statistically, the report finds that of the 27 fixed points for which ten-year monitoring is available, fewest in number show positive signs of improvement (6). Half as many again show signs of decline (9), whilst the majority exhibit ‘no change’ (12). These findings show clearly that there is work to be done. The county-based LCAs identify the forces for change affecting the different landscapes within the AONB but some of the key issues are described below. The AONB Partnership has published guidance on how to manage the different landscapes of the AONB.

### **Changes in agriculture and forestry (LO1, LO2, LP1, LP2, LP3, LP4, BDP9)**

- 2.17. Seemingly small changes such as a gradual deterioration in hedgerow condition and the loss, without replacement, of trees in fields and hedgerows are a cumulative threat to the health of the AONB landscape. They need to be regarded against the

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<sup>29</sup> Malvern Hills and Teme Valley Joint Character Area assessment, Countryside Quality Counts, Natural England (2006)

<sup>30</sup> N.J. Evans (2017): Ten years of landscape change in the Malvern Hills AONB, Centre for Rural Research, University of Worcester

historical backdrop of larger scale changes that were precipitated by Government policy many decades ago. Small-scale changes may result from shifts in land use, for example hedgerow boundaries becoming gappy where they no longer serve a functional purpose and hedgerow trees being regarded as a nuisance because they cast shade on arable crops or are perceived as a danger to a highway. It is important to find ways of creatively retaining and replacing, in good condition, elements and features that are characteristic of the AONB landscape. Mature trees in pastoral fields serve a valuable function providing shade and cover to stock – a function that may become more important in an era of climate change.

- 2.18. Market forces and subsidies are the key drivers of change in the farmed landscape (see Farming and Forestry). Such drivers may exert a positive or negative force on the landscape. For example, a growth in the demand for cider some years ago led to an increase in the planting of bush orchards whilst a recent commercial decision by Heineken not to renew contracts with growers of apples in the region may lead to the grubbing out of traditional orchards. Orchards are an established and valued feature of the AONB landscape.
- 2.19. The quality and quantity of grazing activity on the High Hills and Slopes and Unenclosed Commons landscapes is generally improving. This is mainly due to active management by the Malvern Hills Trust. However, reduced interest in grazing by those with commoners rights (a key cultural activity practiced over centuries) and a decline in the profitability of livestock, together with pressures from recreational demands made by the public means that more effort is still required. Grazing on the hills and commons is regarded as necessary to maintain the health of the Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- 2.20. There has been an increase in the use of polythene to support the production of certain crops. There has also been an increase in polytunnels, both within the southern part of the AONB and in the setting of the AONB, especially to the south and west. It is possible that the use of plastic to support the growth of higher value crops will increase following the UK's departure from the European Union. Such developments can be highly visible, potentially affecting people's enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape<sup>31</sup>.
- 2.21. Horses and ponies are now quite common, especially in certain parts of the AONB. Horse keeping can lead to a growth in built development, paddocks and equine infrastructure. Under poor management, grazing activity can contribute to the degradation of field patterns, hedgerows, grassland and orchards. The sub-division of fields with white tape can be visually intrusive.

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<sup>31</sup> Policy Position Statement on Polytunnels, Campaign to Protect Rural England (2006) and Polytunnels Planning Guide, Herefordshire Council at [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14577/polytunnels\\_planning\\_guide\\_2018.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14577/polytunnels_planning_guide_2018.pdf)

- 2.22. Changing agricultural practices, such as growing soft fruit under polytunnels, and hotter drier summers may lead to an increase in the demand for surface water storage and other supporting infrastructure. There is recent evidence of this with applications for reservoirs in the parish of Colwall. Large areas of standing water are not a characteristic feature of the AONB landscapes and high levels of visibility mean that such developments need to be handled sensitively.
- 2.23. In some areas, the strong regular enclosure pattern has broken down as a result of historical changes with hedgerows and hedgerow trees lost or replaced by fencing. There is little replanting or regeneration of hedgerow trees to replace the mature trees lost. This can lead to a break in green corridors for wildlife and reduced connectivity.
- 2.24. Historically, woodland clearance and the gradual loss of trees along some hedgerows and streams have damaged the visual links between areas historically cleared and those still wooded. This affect may get worse with the spread of tree diseases, such as Chalara dieback of ash (see Agriculture and Forestry).

#### **Development pressures (LP1, LP3, BDO1, BDP2)**

- 2.25. Data shows a gradual increase in the number of farm holdings in the AONB since 2010. Small farms continue to dominate the AONB, though very small farms have reduced slightly. Large farms appear to be increasing gradually.<sup>32</sup> This can lead to development because of the need for new buildings and facilities. Existing properties may be enlarged or new structures built.
- 2.26. There will be a growth in the size of settlements in and around the AONB to meet demands for housing. This is likely to affect views in and out of the area (see 'Views' below). The growth of farm shops and the conversion of farm buildings for non-agricultural businesses have changed the traditional setting of some holdings.
- 2.27. These issues can all affect the landscape. There may be increased built development in both settlements and rural areas; a loss of local vernacular design and distinctiveness; and 'higher' standards of highway management and road signing that may be out character with the area.

#### **Climate change impacts (LP4)**

- 2.28. In spite of recent concerns over a possible trend to more extreme rainfall, the local data does not confirm this. However, the average annual temperature is now about 1.3° C higher than a hundred years ago.<sup>33</sup> This may lead to short term landscape effects such as those arising from fires as well as changes in vegetation patterns and

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<sup>32</sup> State of the Malvern Hills AONB 2019 (draft), Malvern Hills AONB Partnership (2018)

<sup>33</sup> Ian Duncan, Peter Garner and Peter Creed (2018), Nature of the Malverns, an ancient landscape steeped in wildlife, NatureBureau, Newbury - ISBN: 978-1-874357-83-4

agricultural land use that may affect the visual appearance and character of the AONB. With a warmer climate, habitats may change. New species may enter the area, some bringing disease or pests that will harm ‘native’ species or competing with the ‘native’ species for food and shelter.

**Loss and degradation of views (LP1, LP2, LP3, BDP4)**

2.29. The topography of the Malvern Hills means that all the main landscape types are visible from the summit ridge, which also offers extensive views to the countryside forming the setting of the AONB. Similarly, the hills themselves provide a very visible and prominent focus. Views play an important part in shaping our appreciation and understanding of the landscape. The existence of such views, often containing well-known landmarks and cherished landscapes, enriches our daily life, attracts visitors and helps our communities prosper. Without careful management, views within, from and to the AONB may be lost or degraded as vegetation grows or structures are built. The AONB Partnership has produced guidance on identifying and grading views and viewpoints

**Loss of Tranquillity (LP1, LP2, TRP2, TRP6)**

2.30. People search for calmness and spiritual refreshment in the Malvern Hills. The area can feel remote and tranquil; the night sky is inherently dark with recent research suggesting that these nights skies meet the International Dark Skies 'Silver' standard<sup>34</sup>. This is a special quality of this landscape. But the landscape is slowly changing. New activities and developments within the AONB and its setting are adding noise, light and movement into the landscape. As this quality of the AONB declines, then the appreciation and enjoyment of the AONB is likely to diminish. The new National Planning Policy Framework<sup>35</sup> expects:

- The reduction of noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;
- The protection of tranquil areas for their recreational and amenity value; and
- A reduction of the impact of light pollution on intrinsically dark landscapes.

Objectives		Policies	
LO1	Conserve and enhance the distinctive landscapes of the AONB and its setting, particularly those that are most sensitive or have little capacity for change.	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.

<sup>34</sup> This designation comes from the International Dark Sky Association to support those seeking to improve the quality of the night skies. Silver means the Milky Way must be visible in summer and winter. <http://darksky.org/idsr/reserves/>

<sup>35</sup> HMSO (2018) National Planning Policy Framework: Section15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, Ground conditions and pollution paragraph 180

		LP2	Restore distinctive landscapes and landscape features that have been significantly degraded.
		LP3	Promote positive landscape change to landowners, managers, developers, government and all those with an influence over land.
LO2	Advocate and implement appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures to address climate change.	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.
<b>Illustrative actions:</b>			
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.			
Identify appropriate climate change mitigation works, such as new habitat creation, within the AONB and its setting			

## Geodiversity

### Background

- 2.31. The Malvern Hills AONB owes its designation in no small way to the underlying rock structure that shapes the topography and gives spectacular scenery. The Malvern Hills, and hills to the north and south, lie along a line of weakness in the Earth's crust, the Malvern Axis or Malvern Line. The Malvern Line was the margin between two tectonic plates of the Earth's crust.
- 2.32. For many hundreds of millions of years, earth movements continued along the boundary of the tectonic plates. This, together with changes in sea level and wide changes in climatic environment due to continental drift, has given us the interesting variety of geology seen today which has produced such a wealth of scenery. The Malvern Hills themselves are formed from the oldest rocks of the area, Precambrian in age. These were of molten material intruded deep in the Earth's crust and since pushed up by earth movements and uncovered by erosion. To the west of the hills, there are layers of sedimentary Cambrian, Ordovician and Silurian rocks, which have been tilted by the same forces that pushed up the Malvern Hills. This produced a topography of ridges of stronger sandstone and limestone separated by more easily

eroded clay vales. In contrast to the east of the hills is a rift valley in the Severn valley floored with red Triassic sandstones and mudstones.

- 2.33. As elsewhere in England, the importance of managing Geodiversity in the AONB is recognised in the National Policy Planning Framework (2018), and the Geodiversity Charter for England (2014) promotes its implementation. In terms of geoconservation, most of the practical work within the AONB is centred on designated Local Geological Sites (LGSs), and guided by Geodiversity Action Plans (GAPs) which provide a framework for identifying, conserving, and monitoring the geodiversity resource. Current GAPs exist for Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire. A local GAP exists for Castlemorton Common, produced by the AONB Partnership.

### **Special features**

- Very hard igneous and metamorphic rocks that form the high ground of the Malvern Hills ridge, the oldest rocks dating to nearly 700 million years ago, with a small area of volcanic rocks on the lower hills east of the Herefordshire Beacon dated as 566 million years old.
- Cambrian and Ordovician sedimentary rocks, as seen in the ridge and vale area of the southern hills and in fault-bounded slices within the Precambrian ridge area. Ordovician intrusive igneous rocks are a special feature found in the AONB, their hard nature producing hummocky topography on the western slopes.
- Silurian rocks, formed in a marine environment, which underpin the ridge and vale scenery to the west (these include the Wenlock and Aymestry Limestones and the Ludlow Shales).
- Gravels eroded from the Malvern Hills by frost shattering in the Ice Age underlying the commons resulting in very thin soils.
- A complex and diverse range of soil types, giving rise to the varied habitats of the AONB.
- Distinctive landforms and river types, including Castlemorton Common, Silurian scarps and the Ledbury Ridge; and the Leigh Brook, the Leadon and the brook at Gullet Quarry.
- An extensive spread of ice age deposits including the Malvern gravels and lacustrine deposits around Mathon.
- Geological structures such as fault lines running across and along the Malvern Hills including the East Malvern Fault with the Malvern Hills forming the western margin of a rift valley.
- Historic quarries, revealing rock exposures and providing access to them.
- Head deposits, which may conceal and preserve earlier land surfaces and may contain unstratified/reworked artefactual remains.

## Key issues

### Lack of knowledge, appreciation and understanding (GP2, GP4,)

- 2.34. As well as shaping the landscape, geodiversity contributes to local distinctiveness and a sense of place. Its influence is seen in the local Malvern building stone, the limekilns of the area, and in springs and wells. There is often poor understanding of the direct links between geology and landscape; and between the natural and built environments.

### Visitor pressures (GP1, GP4)

- 2.35. Some sites of geological interest are under pressure from visitor use. However, the main degradation is along the Malvern ridge. Promoting Local Geological Sites (LGS) and other sites within the AONB (e.g. Whitman's Hill Quarry) can draw visitors away from honeypot sites. These sites can be developed for geological exploration provided they are safe to visit. Geo-tourism is a potential growth sector, which is encouraged by the Malvern Hills Geocentre, publicity for the Geopark Way, other geological trails, LGS and other designations.

### Impacts of land management operations and development (GP2, GP4, BDO1)

- 2.36. Action without thought can lead to the loss of, or damage to, geodiversity. This is through the loss of designated sites or exposures. With care, temporary, or even permanent, exposures and features can be created. At present, there is little data available on the level of loss or damage, other than for the designated sites. Lost sites include part of Tank Quarry at the north end of the Malvern Hills (which has been used for landfill), and Brays Pit and Mathon Pit to the west of the hills.
- 2.37. Management initiatives to protect land can reduce opportunities for legitimate research and study of the geodiversity resource. There is now only limited access to Gullet, a key geological site for study.

### Climate change impacts (LP4)

- 2.38. Climate change may have significant effects on geodiversity in the AONB. It may lead to the permanent loss of geological features or exposures that are subject to frost action, erosion and deposition. With a warmer climate, there may be more vigorous and intrusive plant growth. Other natural hazards such as landslips and rock falls may become more frequent.

### Threats to Geological Sites (GP1, GP2)

- 2.39. Around a quarter of the SSSIs in the AONB are designated in part for their geological importance. Each site has a management plan and regular monitoring. There are 50 Local Geological Sites (LGS) within the AONB. LGS and other sites can reflect the direct link between geology, wildlife and people. They provide opportunities for schools and groups as outdoor classrooms and yet are underused. A programme of management of LGS implemented under the last AONB Management Plan (2014-

2019), supported by local landowners and significant volunteer effort led by the Earth Heritage Trust. This has led to a significant improvement in the management and condition of LGS. However, access to, and management of, some important sites remains difficult and this needs to be addressed. Loss of LGS arising from direct damage or neglect may result in the loss of exposures or features found nowhere else.

Objectives		Policies	
GO1	Protect important geological and geomorphological sites and promote effective long-term management.	GP1	Secure best practice in geodiversity management within and adjacent to designated sites.
		GP2	Conserve the geodiversity resource in line with Geodiversity Action Plans,
		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.
<b>Illustrative actions:</b>			
Undertake survey, research and monitoring to secure complete information on the state of the AONB's geodiversity resource, including recording temporary exposures before reburial.			
Seek to continue the LGS management programme using local volunteers.			

## Biodiversity

### Background

- 2.40. Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet. There are many distinct habitat types within the AONB, which support a rich and varied diversity of flora and fauna. Biodiversity is important in its own right as well as for the wider well-being of the human population. The variety and condition of nature is an indicator of the health of the environment.
- 2.41. The Government published a Natural Environment White Paper in 2011<sup>36</sup>. It set out the government's strategy for valuing nature in our society and ensuring that it is

<sup>36</sup> Natural Environment White Paper *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, published in 2011

available for use by future generations. The White Paper contained 92 commitments. Commitment 90 led to the publication of the England Natural Environment Indicators since 2014<sup>37</sup>. Their purpose is to track progress against the broad ambitions of the White Paper, to communicate this to stakeholders and interested users and to provide a robust evidence base on which to base future policy interventions.

- 2.42. The Natural Environment Indicators will inform the Government's recently published 25 year plan for the environment<sup>38</sup>. One aim of this plan is to develop natural systems and networks that are fit for purpose, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first.
- 2.43. Defra is developing this aim by proposing that in future, public money will be for conservation and environmental gains that benefit the public at large (see paragraph 1.15). Trials will test potential options and techniques that will help protect, conserve and enhance the environment and biodiversity.
- 2.44. The Government also published Biodiversity 2020 in 2011. It sets out the Government's ambition to halt overall loss of England's biodiversity by 2020, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people<sup>39</sup>. This strategy seeks action in four areas:
- a more integrated large-scale approach to conservation on land and at sea;
  - putting people at the heart of biodiversity policy;
  - reducing environmental pressures; and
  - improving knowledge.
- 2.45. The creation of a landscape that has bigger wildlife sites of better quality, more species and individuals, and is better joined is a key aim<sup>40</sup>. The Government strategy seeks to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning natural systems, and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.
- 2.46. Setting up Local Nature Partnerships was one of the commitments made in the White Paper. They are partnerships of a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people. They work to help their local area manage the natural

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<sup>37</sup> Defra (2017) England Natural Environment Indicators (PB 14475)

<sup>38</sup> The Government, A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, HMSO, 2018

<sup>39</sup> Defra, 'Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services', August 2011

<sup>40</sup> Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.J., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., & Wynne, G.R. (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network*. Report to Defra.

environment. They aim to make sure that its value is taken into account in local decisions, for example about planning and development. The partnerships are encouraged to work at the ‘landscape-scale’ and to identify Nature Improvement Areas using these criteria.

- 2.47. In July 2012, Government published a Biodiversity Framework for England<sup>41</sup>. This aims to consider the management of the environment as a whole, and to acknowledge and take into account the value of nature in decision-making. The latest Implementation Plan was published in July 2018<sup>42</sup>.
- 2.48. Though the UK Biodiversity Partnership no longer operates, many of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) tools and resources remain of use. For example, background information on UK BAP priority habitats and species still forms the basis of much biodiversity work at the national level. However, the AONB also contains important habitats and species that are not on national lists but are local priorities for action. Local Authorities in the area have recently reviewed their county based biodiversity action plans and are now developing biodiversity frameworks to be a focus for action.

**Priority habitats and species**

The list of habitats and species of principal importance in England is published by Defra (2008) under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. At the time of writing, it contains 56 habitats and 943 species. Section 40 of the NERC Act places a duty on all public sector bodies to have regard to biodiversity in their work.

**Special features**

Key AONB habitats	English priority habitat	Key AONB species	English priority species
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Yes	Black Poplar	No
Lowland dry acid grassland	Yes	Noble Chafer	Yes
Lowland calcareous grassland	Yes	High Brown Fritillary Butterfly	Yes
Lowland meadows	Yes	Grayling Butterfly	About to be added
Traditional orchards	Yes	Bullfinch	Yes
Wood pasture and parkland	Yes	Skylark	Yes

<sup>41</sup> JNCC and Defra (on behalf of the Four Countries’ Biodiversity Group). 2012. *UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework*. July 2012. Available from: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6189>.

<sup>42</sup> [http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/UKFramework\\_RevisedImpPlan\\_201807.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/UKFramework_RevisedImpPlan_201807.pdf)

Veteran trees	No	Song Thrush	Yes
Rivers and streams	Yes	Barn Owl	No
Hedgerows and hedgerow trees	Yes	Peregrine Falcon	No
Ponds	Yes	Adder	Yes
Wet woodland	Yes	Great Crested Newt	Yes
		Dormouse	Yes
		Polecat	Yes
		Bats - Lesser Horseshoe Barbastelle Soprano Pipistrelle Bechstein's	Yes

#### **Protected sites**

- There are 16 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) lying partly or wholly within the AONB, the majority of which are designated to protect biodiversity. These represent 10.9% of its total area (11.45 square kms).
- In 2018, 99.8% of the SSSI area was in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering' condition. This is a very slight improvement from the position in 2013 and no SSSI habitat type in the AONB is now considered to be in 'unfavourable declining' condition<sup>43</sup>.
- There is one Local Nature Reserve within the AONB at St Wulstan's (Malvern Wells).

2.49. Non-statutory designation is provided by Local Wildlife Sites. These are identified and reviewed by the respective Local Wildlife Sites Partnerships. In the Worcestershire part of the AONB, there are 23 such sites covering 501 ha. Gloucestershire has 4 Local Wildlife Sites in the AONB, covering 25 ha. Whilst in the Herefordshire part, there are 40 sites covering 1,773 ha. These local sites provide a suite founded on local biodiversity conservation priorities. They have a vital role to play in helping to fulfil local and national conservation targets. In Herefordshire, much has been done to help increase the proportion of local sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented.

<sup>43</sup> Note: a reassessment is due for these sites in 2019. Also, Natural England designated a new SSSI in 2018 (Malvern Common) within the AONB. It is not included in these figures.

## Key issues

### Visitor pressures (BP4)

- 2.50. The impact of visitor pressure can be acute in some parts of the AONB, and has led to the damage of some sensitive habitats. For example, walking, cycling and horse riding on the hills has eroded lowland acid grassland. Other potentially damaging activities include dog roaming (which can disturb wildlife and worry livestock), unrestricted parking, litter and fly tipping.

### Reduction in grazing and other land management practices (agriculture and forestry) (BP1, BP2, BP4)

- 2.51. The special wildlife of the AONB is closely related to thousands of years of farming and forestry traditions. For nature to flourish there must be good land management practices such as grazing, coppicing, orchard management and hedge laying. Whilst Britain is negotiating its exit from the European Union, the future of environmental management schemes is uncertain. However, Defra is suggesting that in future, public money will be for conservation and environmental gains rather than commercial activities (see paragraph 1.15). Such an approach offers the promise of a significant improvement in the health of biodiversity.
- 2.52. There has been a reduction in grazing activity in recent decades, especially on the high hills and surrounding commons. Consequently, there has been an increase in scrub cover and a decline in grassland condition and open bracken cover. There are some benefits, the increase in fringe woodlands increases flight corridors for foraging bats. In more recent years, there has been a significant increase in grazing activity in these areas.
- 2.53. Market forces and future trade agreements will be key to the future of grazing activities when the UK leaves the European Union. Recent agricultural surveys produced by Defra suggest indicate a slight decline in dairy cattle, beef cattle and sheep numbers in the AONB. It is feared that Bovine Tuberculosis may lead to further declines in the numbers of cattle being kept whilst traditional export markets for UK sheep in the European Union may close or become more difficult. The potential impacts of a reduction in grazing animals in the AONB, which is traditionally a pastoral landscape, may be significant.
- 2.54. The value to native wildlife of elements and features in the landscape such as trees and copses depends on management. For example, sustainable stocking levels that do not cause over or under grazing of pasture can help to support a diverse sward of grasses and wild flowers. Early and intensive flailing of hedgerows on an annual basis is likely to deprive wildlife of valuable late season food sources such as nectar, nuts and berries, as well as shelter.

### Climate change impacts (BP1, BP2, LP4)

- 2.55. The potential change in habitat that comes from changes in climate is significant for the future of many species. This may affect not only their distribution but, for some, their very existence within the AONB. Many native tree species cannot germinate, or fruit, without a bout of cold weather. Changes in climate may restrict the distribution of important habitats and keep wildlife populations apart. This will limit their chance to breed. In addition, some species may die if climatic conditions are unfavourable at critical stages in their life cycles. Drier conditions may lead to water shortages, a vital commodity vital for all wildlife. Changes in climate may allow new species and diseases to colonise the UK. This will sometimes be to the detriment of existing biodiversity, especially if species are under stress due to changes. Some species may thrive as the climate changes, either due to conditions that are more favourable or because the stress of change makes them more resilient.
- 2.56. There is a need to develop a landscape that is resilient and adaptable to change. Creating a network of wildlife corridors is crucial (see habitat fragmentation). As is diversity in future planting schemes for new woodlands, orchards and hedgerows. Our knowledge of climate change is evolving and land management practices must adapt as new information emerges. There are opportunities to create habitats in key areas to buffer or offset potential losses.

#### **Problem species (BP1, FP5)**

- 2.57. The UK Plant Health Risk Register (Defra) records and rates risks to UK crops, trees, gardens and ecosystems from plant pests and pathogens. It forms an agreed, evidence-based framework for decisions on priorities for actions by government and plant health stakeholders.
- 2.58. Some species of plant and animals exist within the AONB that harm the native biodiversity of the area. There are feral boar in the nearby Forest of Dean, and these are discussed in the Farming and Forestry chapter. In the absence of natural predators, deer and grey squirrel populations can have devastating impacts on woodland regeneration and tree growth. Populations of wild deer in England, particularly muntjac, have been increasing rapidly in the last 40 years. Deer can also cause damage to crops and vegetables as well as road traffic accidents and infection with diseases that can affect farm livestock and in some cases humans. The Government introduced the Signal crayfish and Narrow-clawed crayfish (also known as Turkish crayfish) into the UK in the 1970's, intended to be farmed for food. They escaped the fisheries and began to out-compete the native white-clawed crayfish for both food resources and habitat. Both are in the AONB.
- 2.59. Until recently, trees such as Sycamore and Ash were spreading over the open hills<sup>44</sup> with scrub and bramble encroachment, resulting in the decline of grassland habitats. This is now declining but needs active management. Other plants such as Japanese

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<sup>44</sup> 'Management Plan for the land managed by the Malvern Hills Conservators', MHC (2006)

Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, New Zealand Pygmy Weed and Giant Hogweed are all invasive species and can suppress native growth particularly where management is not effective.

- 2.60. Pollinators make a vital contribution to sustainable agriculture and the environment. Bees are susceptible to pests and diseases. Current risks include American Foulbrood and European Foulbrood, varroa mites and associated viruses. Potential exotic risks include the small hive beetle, parasitic brood mites and the Asian hornet.

### **Tree diseases (BP1, FP5)**

- 2.61. Our trees face a range of potentially very damaging plant pests and diseases, most of which have entered from abroad. Often causing little trouble in their native habitats, some of these organisms can be virulent, fast-spreading and unstable in new environments that have few of the environmental or biological controls to keep them in check. Of particular concern is Acute Oak Decline (AOD), Chalara ash dieback, Horse Chestnut Bleeding Canker and horse chestnut leaf miner<sup>45</sup>.
- 2.62. AOD affects both of Britain's native oak species as well as other species of oak. In some cases, reducing stress can save the tree. However, death can occur within four or five years of symptoms first becoming visible. Chalara ash dieback causes leaf loss, crown dieback and bark lesions in affected trees. Once a tree is infected, the disease is usually fatal. Horse chestnut trees have for many years been susceptible to bleeding cankers but at a low level. Horse chestnut leaf miner is an exotic insect pest that lives in horse chestnut trees. Its larvae (caterpillars) mine within the leaves, and at high population densities, they can destroy most of the leaf tissues.

### **Lack of data (BP4)**

- 2.63. Action plans across the three counties are now emerging for key habitats and species. There are also a range of surveys and inventories, such as the Biological Record Centres, that provide different levels of information about the biodiversity resource in the area. All English Priority Habitats in the AONB are mapped.
- 2.64. However, there are areas within the AONB where the data is poor; and its use inconsistent. These gaps must be filled to ensure good decision-making in the land management and development control arenas.

### **Habitat fragmentation and the need for joined-up management (BP1)**

- 2.65. The management of key national and local sites is important. To keep these sites in a good condition, there needs to be appropriate management and monitoring. However, there is also a need for greater effort to improve the wildlife value of the areas between key sites. This will shield key habitats from harmful pressures,

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<sup>45</sup> For a full explanation of each condition see <https://www.forestry.gov.uk/pestsanddiseases>

increase their resilience and their connectivity. Care must be taken to control ‘pest’ species passing through wildlife corridors.

- 2.66. Nature does not recognise the AONB boundary. National planning policy recognises the need for strategies at the landscape-scale to help nature<sup>46</sup>. There is a need to consider land outside of the AONB as well as within it.
- 2.67. The Malvern Hills Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund began in 2018<sup>47</sup>. National level funding is available for the AONB team and partners to help a group of farmers and other land managers work together to:
- improve the natural environment at a landscape rather than single-farm scale
  - achieve greater improvements than individual holdings could on their own

### **Species Loss (BP2)**

- 2.68. A number of factors have contributed to the loss of individual species of plant and animal from the area. This trend continues. Species loss can be attributed to one or a number of factors such as loss and fragmentation of habitat, disturbance, climate change. For example, the High Brown Fritillary appears to have been lost from the area in the recent past whilst the range of the Grayling butterfly has contracted significantly, now only being seen on the northern Malvern Hills. The emerging action plans across the three counties may present strategies to arrest losses and reintroduce key species.

### **Re-wilding (BP2, BP4)**

- 2.69. Some call for the re-wilding of parts of the Malverns. Re-wilding is the large-scale restoration of ecosystems where nature can take care of itself. It seeks to reinstate natural processes and, where appropriate, missing species, allowing them to shape the landscape and the habitats within. However, any re-wilded land would be lacking the original keystone species, such as the auroch (a very large species of cattle) and so would not function naturally. Our farming livestock provide a partial surrogate through conservation grazing. Active management shapes the Malvern’s landscape; it is not a wild landscape despite the term ‘natural’ beauty. As discussed elsewhere, lost species can be returned but pests must be managed. In a relatively small area under fragmented ownership, it is more appropriate to develop management interventions that work with nature rather than leave management to nature.

### **Losses to development and sources of compensation (BP2, BP3, BP5, BDO1)**

- 2.70. Development without thought can have a harmful effect on nature. For example, some development may break up wildlife corridors. However, good planning policies can minimise this impact. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) aims to

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<sup>46</sup> Paragraph 174 National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018)

<sup>47</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/680375/csff-2017nationalround-applicants-details.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/680375/csff-2017nationalround-applicants-details.pdf)

improve the natural environment<sup>48</sup>. There is a new benchmark for the design and maintenance of green infrastructure in housing and commercial development. It seeks to secure space for wildlife and recreation<sup>49</sup>. The Development Plans produced by each planning authority reflect this. Wildlife can benefit from the financial compensation some people pay when they get planning permission. However, monitoring is required to ensure an adequate gain for wildlife and this has resource implications.

2.71. The NPPF guidance to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity is clear<sup>50</sup>. If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development:

- cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts):
- adequately mitigated; or, as a last resort,
- compensated for;

then planning permission should be refused.

2.72. There are three sources of compensation in the planning system. They are biodiversity offsetting, the Community Infrastructure Levy<sup>51</sup> and planning obligations:

- Biodiversity offsets are upfront payments made by developers to secure the delivery of new or improved habitat over the long-term. The delivery is carried out by a separate organisation or landowner and compensation sites are monitored to ensure wildlife benefits occur. They are different from other types of green compensation, as they need to show measurable results. Their application is through planning conditions and they can run alongside the Levy.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy is a charge levied on buildings and extensions to buildings according to their floor area. In this way, local councils can raise money from development to help pay for facilities such as green space.
- Planning obligations, also known as Section 106 agreements, are private agreements made between local authorities and developers. They can be attached to a planning permission to make acceptable development that would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms. The use of planning obligations is restricted where a Community Infrastructure Levy operates.

Objectives		Policies	
BO1	Establish and maintain coherent and resilient	BP1	Enhance the wildlife value of the countryside and achieve greater buffering and connectivity between key habitats within the

<sup>48</sup> National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018) [www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicyframework/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicyframework/)

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/>

<sup>50</sup> See paragraph 175 of National Planning Policy Framework 2018

<sup>51</sup> The Levy is a new planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008. It came into force on 6 April 2010 through the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

	ecological networks across the AONB and beyond.		AONB and between the AONB and the countryside beyond.
		BP2	Conserve, enhance and expand key habitats and populations of key species in line with local biodiversity priorities and the England Biodiversity Strategy.
		BP3	In exercising development control decisions, secure developer contributions to enhance the natural environment.
BO2	Ensure that the benefits and services provided by the natural environment are understood and accurately valued by decision-makers at all levels.	BP4	Improve knowledge and understanding of the AONB’s biodiversity, to enable evaluation of the effectiveness of policies and actions.
		BP5	Safeguard biodiversity from potential damaging impacts arising from development or other activities.
<b>Illustrative actions:</b>			
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

### Background

- 2.73. The Malvern Hills AONB contains a large variety of heritage assets that include iconic hill forts, historic farmsteads, listed and non-listed buildings and the designed landscapes of country houses. These assets are set within a landscape of rich historic diversity with its distinctive field patterns, ancient woodlands and commons; and the locally distinctive settlements with their local vernacular and buildings of special architectural or historic interest. These are a vital element of the AONB's character and an important resource for leisure and study.
- 2.74. There are a number of ways to protect heritage assets. Statutory protection through national designation is one mechanism that achieves this. Buildings and structures may be “listed” under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Archaeological remains may be “scheduled” under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. These different designated assets are on the

National Heritage List for England<sup>52</sup>, a record of all nationally designated heritage assets (including Registered Parks and Gardens and Registered Battlefields). Planning authorities can also designate areas as conservation areas, which aim to preserve areas of special architectural or historic interest.

- 2.75. In addition, local listing allows for the management of local heritage through the planning system and provides an opportunity to engage with local communities. The conservation and contribution of locally listed heritage assets is a material consideration in planning decisions that directly affect them or their setting. Local heritage assets can range from buildings and other structures to historic designed landscapes and archaeology.
- 2.76. Not all heritage assets are designated or benefit from other mechanisms of protection. These undesignated heritage assets still make an important contribution to the local character of the AONB and information on these and designated heritage assets are recorded on the Historic Environment Records (HERs) maintained by the three county councils. These records are an essential source of information on our understanding of the character and management of the historic environment. The information is used for planning and development control, for conservation of the historic environment and to inform public benefit and educational use.
- 2.77. Studies by English Heritage (now Historic England) and the three county councils have significantly improved our understanding of the historic environment of the AONB (for example, Historic Farmsteads, Historic Landscape Characterisation and the National Mapping Programme work that was summarised in the English Heritage publication ‘The Malvern Hills, An Ancient Landscape’). These publications highlight areas for further research and this, combined with new discoveries, will continue to add to our understanding.

### **Special features**

- Iron Age hill forts at British Camp and Midsummer Hill.
- The shire ditch – a ridge-top boundary interpreted as having prehistoric origins.
- King’s Thirds ditches enclosing Royal Forests land c1628.
- Bronze Age burial grounds, for example at Colwall and Mathon.
- Moated sites representing medieval settlements.
- Industrial architecture such as limekilns, tunnels and quarry cottages.
- Listed buildings, including Eastnor Castle, Bromesberrow Place and Little Malvern Priory, as well as listed headstones and chest tombs; and gas lamps.
- Conservation areas – including Malvern Wells, Eastnor, Colwall and part of Cradley.
- Victorian villas of Malvern (Malvern stone and render).

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<sup>52</sup> The National Heritage Protection Plan 2012 sets out how English Heritage, together with partners in the heritage sector, will prepare the National Heritage List and deliver heritage protection.

- Half-timbered buildings.
- Historic designed landscapes of national significance, including their trees and woodlands, at Eastnor and Hope end.
- Historic designed landscapes of local significance, such as Old Colwall and Bromesberrow.
- The unenclosed landscape and designed elements of the Malvern Hills ridge.
- Victorian tree plantings, for example lime boulevards in Colwall, and veteran trees.
- Springs, wells and well-dressing.
- Artistic associations with poets (Elizabeth Barrett Browning), architects (Voysey) and composers (Elgar).

## **Key issues**

### **Conserving undesignated heritage assets (HP1, HP2, HP3, IP5)**

- 2.78. Designated heritage assets are subject to statutory protection. This is by inclusion on the National Heritage List or by conservation area designation. Non-designated prominent features are not as well protected and receive no statutory protection as heritage assets though they may be a material consideration in the planning system. Other regulatory systems (such as the Hedgerow Regulations) may offer indirect protection. However, whilst this protection can help to prevent deliberate damage, it will not ensure good management. Additional measures may be needed to protect features from neglect and to bring them into good condition. Many features in the AONB are locally important and may be at risk. Yet they receive no statutory protection. The county HERs provide a record of locally distinct heritage assets.

### **Lack of data (HP1)**

- 2.79. Good, regularly maintained data is essential for the management of sites and the protection of heritage assets. Information now exists on the condition of Scheduled Monuments, Grade I and II\* Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens in the AONB. This is through national level data coordinated by Historic England. However, much research still needs to be done. There is a need to ensure that data exists also for undesignated heritage assets. HERs hold a diverse range of records for all areas including the AONB. However, a more comprehensive record of the condition of the historic environment is needed so that this can help guide the priorities for its conservation and enhancement.

### **Poor awareness of the historic environment (HP1, HP2, HP3)**

- 2.80. There is poor awareness about the historic environment among some members of the public and some land and property owners. People may not know that heritage assets exist or appreciate their place in the wider landscape. They may not understand the affects of change and development on the assets, or the consequences of neglect. Raising public awareness, particularly by encouraging a stronger 'pride of place' for the historic environment and an appreciation of its

economic value, will greatly aid its conservation and establish it more firmly as an essential asset.

#### **Climate change impacts (LP4)**

- 2.81. It has been predicted that climate change will result in more extremes in weather conditions. This could cause issues for heritage assets, for example, erosion, damage through tree fall or failure of structures through increased extremes of wetting and drying.

#### **Maintaining local distinctiveness in the built environment (HP1, HP2)**

- 2.82. There is no single building style, type of material or pattern of development in the AONB. There are a range of styles that give character and distinctiveness to different parts of the area. Lack of attention to details can harm the special qualities of the AONB and diminish the distinctiveness of its built heritage.

#### **Damage from rural land use and recreation (HP1, HP3)**

- 2.83. Farming and forestry practices can adversely affect heritage assets, particularly archaeological remains. Quite often, this is because their presence is unknown or their value understated. The remains of heritage assets can be damaged by cultivation and drainage. The removal of boundaries can break a link with the landscapes of the past. A change from permanent grassland to seasonal cropping increases the chance of damage to buried heritage assets by cultivation. New, more vigorous crops, such as energy crops, may have invasive roots that can break into a structure. Farm diversification and the division of properties may intensify these effects. There is evidence that recreational pressure (from walkers, mountain and trail bikes) can be detrimental to heritage assets. A survey of the Shire Ditch in 2006<sup>53</sup>, for example, found that this Scheduled Monument was suffering erosion as a result of informal recreational use. Defra is suggesting that in future, public money will be for conservation and environmental gains rather than commercial activities (see paragraph 1.15). Such an approach may help conserve heritage assets.

#### **Impacts of street lighting (HP1, BDP5, TRP3)**

- 2.84. There is no legal requirement to provide public lighting but some people feel that street lighting within rural settlements is an important safety feature. Lighting schemes can have a negative effect upon the character of the rural landscape, both in day time (by the introduction of intrusive structures) and night time (by 'light pollution'). Traditional light fittings add much to the local character of an area and reinforce the sense of local distinctiveness.

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<sup>53</sup> See 'The Malvern Hills an Ancient Landscape' by Mark Bowden (ISBN: 1 873592 82 5).

Objectives		Policies	
HO1	Conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage of the AONB through appropriate funding, management and awareness raising.	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, Historic England 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.
<b>Illustrative actions:</b>			
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.			
Prepare and review appropriate management documents for key heritage assets to improve future conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.			

## Farming and forestry

### Background

- 2.85. Farming and forestry still represent the significant forms of land management in the AONB. They continue to provide local jobs and income. There are different scales and forms of activity in farming, ranging from small-holders who consume their own produce to those who operate commercially with a strong profit motive. Equally, forestry generally refers to larger scale commercial management operations whilst woodland management has a very long tradition of yielding valuable products for local use.
- 2.86. Landowners, farmers and tenants manage the land in the AONB, often with the input of Government and its agencies. A number of schemes currently exist to support landowners and managers. These include the following:
- The Single Payment Scheme is the main agricultural subsidy scheme in the EU<sup>54</sup>. There is no link between subsidies and production, so farmers have flexibility in how they run their business.

<sup>54</sup> This is known as Cross Compliance

- Environmental Stewardship is part of the Rural Development Programme for England open to all farmers, land managers and tenants in England. It supports on-going good stewardship of the land and management that improve the quality of the environment.
- Countryside Stewardship is part of the Rural Development Programme for England. There are a series of grants:
  - Capital grant for farmers and land managers to produce a woodland management plan.
  - Capital grant for farmers and land managers to restock or improve woodland due to tree health problems.
  - A facilitation fund supports people and organisations that bring farmers, foresters, and other land managers together to improve the local natural environment at a landscape scale. A Malvern Hills Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund started in 2018<sup>55</sup>.
- The Countryside Productivity Scheme is part of the Rural Development Programme for England. It provides funding for projects in England that improve productivity in the farming and forestry sectors and help create jobs and growth in the rural economy. The government has guaranteed funding for the grants if these are agreed and signed before the UK's departure from the EU, even if the grant agreements continue after we have left the EU.<sup>56</sup>

2.87. The future of such schemes is uncertain as, generally, funding is through European Union models of support. The Government has stated that where agreements start before the UK leaves the European Union, payments will continue but projects must be finished and grant claims submitted by the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

2.88. There are sometimes tensions between the need to improve farm profitability, which may involve more intensive and less traditional forms of land management, and the aspiration to conserve and enhance natural beauty, which has its own costs. The vast majority of landowners recognise the need to maintain the quality of the landscape. However, retaining the natural beauty needs resources and, with reducing exchequer support, there will be a need for other sources of income generation.

2.89. The Water Framework Directive<sup>57</sup> requires that all inland and coastal waters within defined river basin districts must reach at least *good status* by 2027. In response, the

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<sup>55</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/680375/csff-2017nationalround-applicants-details.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/680375/csff-2017nationalround-applicants-details.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> The last date for applications is 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018

<sup>57</sup> Council Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (Water Framework Directive)

UK Government launched a Pilot Catchment approach in 2011, incorporating wider environmental and social benefits within the river network and its landscape. The River Teme is one of the Pilot Catchments. The Teme Catchment Partnership was established at the beginning of 2012 with support from a number of organisations, including the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership.

- 2.90. Trees have a huge significance in the AONB landscape, contributing to the heritage and rural economy. Trees provide major ecosystem services to society, as well as a direct economic value and social amenity<sup>58</sup>. Trees can also help mitigate climate change by capturing and storing carbon. Woodland covers around 20% of the total AONB area. This consists mainly of small broadleaved woodlands on banks, ridges and hilltops, and hedgerows. There are larger woodlands covering more than 100 ha at Eastnor, Storridge/Alfrick and Bromesberrow. Alongside global trading and modifications to climate, new diseases and pests are affecting trees in the AONB. Defra has recently published its tree health resilience strategy. This explains how the government will work with others to protect England's tree population from these threats<sup>59</sup>.

### Key facts<sup>60</sup>

- Agriculture is the dominant land use within the AONB, occupying around 80% of the area.
- Permanent grassland accounts for 46.3% of the farmed area, cropped and fallow land 31.5% and rough grazing (not including Malvern Hills Trust land) 5.5%. Woodland on agricultural holdings covers 11.1% of the utilised agricultural area.
- There are 116 farm holdings in the AONB
- 53.4% of all farms in the AONB are devoted wholly to livestock, 12.9% are horticultural, and cereals and general cropping together account for 18.1% of all holdings.
- 43.1% of farms are between 5 and 20ha in size, 15.5% of farms are smaller than 5 ha in size, 13.8% are over 100 ha.
- 69.8% of all livestock in the AONB are sheep with cattle accounting for approximately 9.8%.
- Woodland covers around 20% of the total AONB area.
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<sup>58</sup> UK National Ecosystem Assessment: <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/> and <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/uknea/>.

<sup>59</sup> Defra (2018), Tree health resilience strategy 2018, HMSO  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-health-resilience-strategy-2018>

<sup>60</sup> 'State of the Malvern Hills AONB 2018', draft)

## Special features

- Ancient semi-natural woodlands, often small-scale and found on banks, ridges and hill tops.
- Unimproved and semi-improved grasslands and commons, providing valuable grazing land and important wildlife habitats.
- Apple, pear and cherry orchards.
- Hedges and hedgerow trees, forming boundaries to old pastures and arable land.
- Large wooded estates and parklands with a mosaic of grassland, woodland and cultivated land.
- Veteran trees in hedgerows, woodlands and fields

## Key issues

### Brexit (FO1, FP6)

- 2.91. The UK will have formally left the European Union and, therefore, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in March 2019. Post CAP, the UK Government is committed to guaranteeing the same level of total funding for agriculture until 2022. An ‘agricultural transition’ period in England will help farmers prepare for new trading relationships and a new environmental land management system.
- 2.92. Defra wish to guarantee the Pillar 1 basic payments (BPS) for a number of years beyond the implementation period. During these years, Defra will adjust the basic payments so that size of business is not the main criteria. The intent is to simplify the schemes and eventually replace BPS with a system that pays for conservation and environmental gains that benefit the public at large. It will not be simply to support commercial farming activities (see paragraph 1.15). Natural and cultural capital and ecosystem services could become key components of future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms (see paragraph 1.20).
- 2.93. Land managers will have to adjust their business plans to accommodate the new approach. Some may choose to decline subsidies and develop a more intensive business model; others may find it hard to maintain a viable business without a subsidy for food production.

### Intensification of food production (FO1, FP6, LP1)

- 2.94. Growth in global demand for food may lead to worries about food security. There will be pressure to intensify food production in the UK. Such intensification can happen without detriment to the natural environment but this needs careful planning and management. Rising costs of inputs, such as fertilisers and energy, together with high environmental standards, may also drive sustainable improvements in

productivity. Defra’s proposed new environmental land management system should encourage sustainability and strengthen links to enhancing landscape character.<sup>61</sup>

### **Declining farm and forest incomes (FO1)**

- 2.95. As we leave the EU, changes in exchange-rates and the imposition of tariffs may drive up the cost of food and migrant labour may reduce. Raising the level of the minimum wage and improving pensions will push up labour costs. The competition from imported goods may well increase. There may be increased volatility in the price of fuel and animal feedstuffs, coupled with higher standards of animal welfare. There may be less money in the rural economy and fewer jobs in agriculture (2016 data from Defra suggests that there are now just 66 full-time farmers in the AONB). Collectively such threats could have a major impact on key land uses that underpin the natural beauty of the AONB.

### **Loss of traditional skills in agricultural and woodland management practices (HP3, FP8)**

- 2.96. Traditional skills, such as coppicing, hedge laying and orchard management, have been in significant decline, though there are signs of a more recent renaissance. There are courses that are helping to revive the traditions that still have a valuable role to play in countryside management. Conservation days and voluntary activity also help to keep these skills alive. In some areas, the average age of land managers is increasing and a shortage of new land managers may threaten the continuation of beneficial land management practices. As people retire, skills are lost and there is a risk that some land drops out of traditional management, this may lead to new uses that do not support the local character of the AONB.

### **Impacts of farm diversification (FO1, FP6)**

- 2.97. In difficult times, farmers have to find either additional or new sources of income. They may grow new crops and/or move into other sectors, such as warehousing, business parks, tourism and recreation. They may use their land for energy or communication structures. This can help to maintain a viable business and improve the products and services on offer to the community and visitors.
- 2.98. While good for the rural economy, certain forms of diversification have the potential to degrade the special qualities of the area. For example, an expansion of equestrian activities could alter the condition of fields and field boundaries whilst large or tall structures may impact on the visual amenity of the area. Good practice guidance is available to support many forms of diversification.

### **Climate change impacts (FO1, FP4, FP5, LP4)**

- 2.99. Most people accept that our climate is changing. Local meteorological data suggests that the Malvern Hills do not seem to be getting more extreme rainfall but the

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<sup>61</sup> See DEFRA 2018

average annual temperature is now about 1.3° C higher than a hundred years ago<sup>62</sup>. Warmer winters may increase the risk of pest establishment, spread and impact. Climate change also has the potential to alter dramatically growing conditions for trees and plants. This may result in the decline of certain species from the landscape and an increase in others. Climate change and new agricultural crops may increase the demand for water.

- 2.100. Woods and forests lessen the impacts of climate change. They absorb and store carbon dioxide in living tissue, taking it from the atmosphere and out of circulation until the leaves and dead wood eventually decompose. Roughly, one quarter of a tree's weight is carbon. Planting trees for timber and firewood, or as windbreaks, can help reduce energy requirements from fossil fuels.

### **Pests and pathogens (FP5)**

- 2.101. Tree cover in the AONB has been depleted in the past, for example, through Dutch Elm disease. In recent years, a number of new tree and plant pests and pathogens have emerged as significant risks. Chalara dieback of ash, acute oak decline and horse chestnut bleeding canker are but three examples. Tree diseases have the potential to affect dramatically the landscape character of the AONB (See Biodiversity chapter).
- 2.102. Threats to tree health have increased with changes in weather patterns and the increase in the volume and diversity of plants and plant products entering the UK. This has increased the likelihood of plant pests and pathogens spreading through gardens and woodlands and potentially causing serious damage to either our native flora or commercial crops.
- 2.103. In view of the rising threat, Defra uses the UK Plant Health Risk Register to record and rate risks to UK crops, trees, gardens and ecosystems from plant pests and pathogens.
- 2.104. Bovine TB is one of the most significant problems affecting animal health and sustainable livestock farming in England. The government is committed to delivering the 25 year strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free status for England.<sup>63</sup> Controlling the disease in badgers where TB is widespread is an important part of that strategy. The current threat of TB is a deterrent to those who might otherwise keep cattle in the AONB as part of sustainable and traditional land management.

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<sup>62</sup> Ian Duncan, Peter Garner and Peter Creed (2018), Nature of the Malverns, an ancient landscape steeped in wildlife, NatureBureau, Newbury - ISBN: 978-1-874357-83-4

<sup>63</sup> Defra, 'A strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free status for England', PB14088 (2014) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategy-for-achieving-officially-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-forengland>

- 2.105. There are feral boar in the nearby Forest of Dean. They are spreading out into the wider countryside as their numbers increase. They are likely to be in the Malvern Hills AONB soon. These animals are not true wild boar but the descendants of wild boar and domesticated pigs. Whilst they can be regarded as a part of nature, they can be damaging to farming interests, for example, by uprooting crops and disturbing soil. . They are also likely to be injurious to below ground archaeology and native wildlife, for example grubbing up wildflower meadows and eating ground nesting birds, small mammals and reptiles. If a significant population establishes in the area it will need to be controlled.

#### **Impact of plantations within ancient semi-natural woodland sites (FP3, FP4)**

- 2.106. Ancient woodland is a unique and irreplaceable habitat. Plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) would have started life as ancient semi-natural woodland but native broadleaved trees have been felled and non-native trees planted in their place. This has damaged the character of the AONB and its biodiversity. These sites need restoration.

#### **Lack of sustainable woodland management (FP2, FP3, FP4, FP6)**

- 2.107. Many woodlands in the area are small, fragmented and difficult to access. There is often no infrastructure to make sustainable woodland management viable. Consequently, they have not been actively managed for many years. Not only has their economic value fallen, so has their worth as a natural service. Markets for hardwoods are failing. However, there are new markets. The demand for renewable energy and for new housing provides an opportunity to use more wood. This will support a low carbon economy and ease climate change effects. Some woodlands provide valuable cover for game birds which is profitable, but there is a need to ensure that key woodland features and interests are not compromised by over-stocking of game birds/an overly intensive approach to game management. Some wildlife is likely to benefit from the absence of management in woodland but on balance, informed management is preferable to neglect. .

#### **Lack of 'local' products and markets (FP2, FP7, FP6, IP2)**

- 2.108. The production of locally distinctive food and forestry products can help to conserve and enhance the unique landscape and wildlife of the AONB. There is a desire to buy locally grown foods, as shown by the success of farmers markets and labelling in supermarkets. There is an interest in woodland craft products, though this remains a niche market. The development of the local products sector needs more than just people and funds. In the food sector, there is a need for good services, such as local abattoirs and butchers. There is a need to raise awareness and support. Encouraging interest in using local goods means that more people will supply and buy locally. Using goods locally is likely to be good for the environment. It reduces the carbon footprint. It may also raise awareness and support for the way land is managed. There is an opportunity to develop a local brand (see Tourism).

### **Management of cider and perry orchards and hop fields (FP2, BDP6)**

- 2.109. The horticultural market is complex. There are changing tastes leading to new varieties, partly influenced by health issues, like the sugar tax. There is currently an over-supply in cider apples and recently decisions have been made to end contracts with certain growers. Commercially viable bush orchards and hop fields can be intensive forms of land use but environmental benefits can arise from such activities, for example, through organic approaches and the planting and management of wildlife rich habitats around fields that shelter crops and attract pollinators and natural predators (see below). A lack of management in most traditional orchards is hastening the demise of these very valuable wildlife habitats.

### **Sustainable use of pesticides (FP1, FP5)**

- 2.110. The European Union wishes to reduce the risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment. Many British farmers support this. Along with the support for organic farming, it promotes the use of Integrated Pest Management or alternative approaches, such as non-chemical alternatives to pesticides<sup>64</sup>. There is a need to train users, advisors and distributors of pesticides; the inspection of pesticide application equipment; and information and awareness-raising about pesticide risks.

### **Need for sustainable soil and water management (FP6)**

- 2.111. A good supply of high quality soil and water is essential to support profitable agriculture as well as the wildlife and landscapes of the AONB. Protecting soil and water leads to cleaner drinking water, safer bathing water, healthier fisheries, thriving wildlife and a lower flood risk. Programmes such as Catchment Sensitive Farming help farmers to protect water bodies and the environment.

### **Decline in pollinator numbers (FP5)**

- 2.112. Most plants need pollination to set seed. There are many ways of achieving pollination but a large proportion of plants rely on insects to pollinate their flowers. In the UK, bees (wild solitary bees and bumblebees, as well as domesticated honeybees), flies (including hoverflies and bee-flies), butterflies, moths, wasps and beetles carry out the majority of pollination. The economic value of this service has been estimated at £400 million. The numbers of insect pollinators has declined due in part to changes to agricultural practices, the loss of natural or semi-natural habitats and the use of pesticides. Within Countryside Stewardship, the Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife Package addresses the declines in our wild insect pollinators<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Directive 2009/128/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides

<sup>65</sup> See <https://www.buglife.org.uk/pollinators-and-farming>

- 2.113. Bees have received particular attention. Honeybees contribute directly to local food production and make an important contribution, through pollination, to crop production. Defra is responsible for the bee health policy and in particular, the implementation of the Healthy Bees Plan<sup>66</sup>. The National Bee Unit delivers the bee health programme. The aim of the programme is to control the spread of endemic notifiable diseases of honeybees and to identify and manage the risk associated with new exotic pests and diseases that may be introduced.
- 2.114. American foulbrood and European foulbrood are notifiable diseases prevalent in the UK. Small hive beetle and Tropilaelaps mite are notifiable pests but not thought to be present in the UK. Import regulations are the main defence against its introduction. *Vespa velutina*, known as the Asian hornet or yellow legged hornet, is a predator of honey bees. It was confirmed in Gloucestershire in September 2016. And recently has been confirmed in other parts of the country. Locally, beekeeping associations operate disease control and self-help schemes and provide practical advice to members on disease recognition, varroa control and good husbandry.
- 2.115. At a landscape-scale, there is great scope to work in collaboration with farmers and landowners to produce bigger and more beneficial results to benefit pollinators. Planning the provision of food, sheltering and nesting opportunities across a landscape will have greater benefits and can also ensure efficient use of financial resources. Coordination with neighbours can be an effective way of identifying and developing ideas, and brings with it opportunities for collaborative land management and efficiencies in working such as sharing equipment, joint use of contractors and shared grazing schemes.

Objectives		Policies	
FO1	Ensure that sustainable farming and forestry become the primary means by which the distinctive landscapes of the AONB are managed.	FP1	Ensure that agricultural and forestry practices include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sustainable production of produce</li> <li>• sustainable utilisation of soil, minimising erosion</li> <li>• effective water catchment management</li> <li>• avoidance of direct pollution and measures to reduce diffuse pollution</li> <li>• farm waste minimisation and recycling</li> </ul>
		FP2	Bring woodlands, orchards and other characteristic habitats into favourable conservation condition through encouraging and supporting management regimes that provide an economic return.

<sup>66</sup> Healthy Bees - Protecting and improving the health of honey bees in England and Wales, Defra (March 2009)

		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.
		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.
		FP6	Encourage the take-up of options and management practices that benefit the natural and cultural capital of the AONB.
		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.
<b>Illustrative actions:</b>			
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.			
Support business partners who develop relevant local provenance brands.			

### 3. Community life

#### Introduction

- 3.1. The character of the Malvern Hills AONB is as much about the communities who live there, as it is the physical form of its landscape. Interaction between people and the land over thousands of years has made the AONB what it is today. Conserving and enhancing the AONB involves meeting the social and economic needs of its people, not just the physical management of the land.
- 3.2. Many local people derive their livelihoods from the AONB, or they commute to centres of employment nearby. There are also many retired people living in the AONB who depend on local services. High house prices are a clear indicator that people want to live here, attracted by the beautiful landscapes, tranquil villages and the gentle rural ambience of the area.
- 3.3. The local economy has a broad base. Agriculture helps to support some communities, though some farmers are moving into tourism and recreation to

maintain their incomes. There are businesses and high-tech industries in the AONB and nearby that employ local people and attract others to live there. Tourism is a growing sector, with the landscape and the picturesque towns and villages being key attractions.

- 3.4. This next group of themes – living and working, built development, tourism and transport – address people’s social and economic needs. These issues are all related. Changes in one area will often affect others. For example, an active social and economic climate is vital to maintain income. However, it can also lead to a demand for more development. This in turn can bring higher traffic loads and greater visitor impact on a landscape that can be sensitive to change.
- 3.5. Local communities need local services but some shops are closing; and many rural areas have minimal or no public transport. These changes can make life harder in communities. Increased car use can affect the local environment. The challenge is to find solutions that boost the social and economic well-being of communities while maintaining the quality of the environment.

## **A vision for 2040**

### **Living and working**

- The AONB offers a range of cultural services to the communities that use it, providing a sense of place, spiritual refreshment and a focus for health and well-being.
- A vibrant, harmonious and diverse local community engages in local decision-making and understands how it can benefit from, and contribute to, the AONB.
- People enjoy a high quality of living with well-used and excellent local facilities sustained by residents and visitors.
- There is good access to quality jobs and appropriate sustainable housing.
- The community understands the need to conserve the AONB’s unique features and is actively involved in doing so.
- The impacts of climate change and ways to adapt to it are understood, and the community has a low carbon footprint.

### **Built development**

- Planning and development meets the needs of local people and respects the character and distinctiveness of the landscape.
- Communities take a full and active part in the planning process.
- New development is sustainable and to a high standard of design which enhances local distinctiveness, for example, using local materials and through informed use of colour.
- The quality of the setting of the area’s heritage is conserved and celebrated.
- Agricultural development supports the local economy and respects the special character of the area.

## Tourism

- The AONB is an exemplar of sustainable tourism based on its rich natural and cultural heritage
- The area's heritage and scenery draws people and improves their quality of life.
- The visitor experience is of a high quality and is open to all in society.
- Visitors' enjoyment and sustainable use of the AONB is well informed and respectful of local residents and land management practices.
- Local shops, pubs and farm gates serve a bounty of local produce, and tourism makes an important contribution to the local economy.
- Tourism and visitor use respects and benefits environmental assets, actively contributing to the positive state of the AONB and the natural environment.
- High tech skills are used to find innovative solutions to issues and to support sustainable tourism.

## Transport

- An effective public and community transport system serves the needs of the local community, visitors and the economy in a sustainable way.
- A network of tranquil lanes and accessible green space provides opportunities for walkers, cyclists and others to enjoy the area without using cars.
- Cycle lanes and footpaths link settlements with schools, places of work and the wider countryside, supporting environmentally friendly transport and a healthy lifestyle.

## Living and working

### Background

- 3.6. The AONB is home to around 12,000 people. They live in the villages, isolated farms and houses and in communities around the Malvern Hills and on the edge of Ledbury. Over the years, local people have looked after the landscape we now cherish.
- 3.7. People wish to live and work here because it is a beautiful area. The area is also an attractive place in which to retire. The tourism sector benefits from the high quality of the landscape. Many businesses gain value by being associated with it and by being careful with the ecosystem services it provides. Most know the risks to their brand image, security of resources and their bottom line if they do not.
- 3.8. In 2010, the Government replaced Regional Development Agencies with Local Enterprise Partnerships. These partnerships lead the drive for sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation in their area. They are to tackle transport, housing and planning as part of an integrated approach to growth and infrastructure delivery.

- 3.9. Twenty-two parishes lie wholly or partly in the AONB. Eleven parishes have produced Parish Plans, some of them in partnership with each other. These plans identify key issues and actions relating to rural services. They also help to focus local minds on issues that are important to the community. They are a source of information for the sustainable community strategies and local authority policies. Given that these plans grow out of a community consultation exercise, they give a good indication of the key issues.
- 3.10. The Government has placed a renewed emphasis on planning at the local level because it believes that local people know best what local needs are and how they can be met. The Localism Act<sup>67</sup> gives local people a very strong voice by allowing them to shape the future of their area through Neighbourhood Development Plans (which are statutory documents) and other initiatives such as Community Right to Buy.
- 3.11. A number of parishes are now considering or preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans<sup>68</sup>. Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Parishes and neighbourhood forums<sup>69</sup> can use neighbourhood planning to:
- allocate land for housing;
  - set planning policies through neighbourhood plans to determine decisions on planning applications; and
  - grant planning permission through Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order.

### **Key facts**<sup>70</sup>

- Around 12,000 people are resident in the AONB, living in just over 5,000 households.
- AONB residents are more likely to own their own homes and to have access to a car than the England average.
- Income levels for people in the three AONB local authority areas (Herefordshire, Malvern Hills District and Forest of Dean District) are generally higher than the average for the West Midlands and South West regions, but similar to levels for England and Wales.
- Levels of deprivation for the same three local authority areas are

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<sup>67</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted>

<sup>68</sup> Para 29, National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018) and the Localism Act 2011.

<sup>69</sup> The Local Planning Authorities have different approaches to neighbourhood planning in respect of whether they identify/allocate sites for development.

<sup>70</sup> From 'An Evidence base for the Malvern Hills AONB', Centre for Rural Research (2007).

correspondingly low.

- 1.93% of the AONB population is unemployed (the average for England is 3.35%).
- 18.13% of the AONB population is retired (the average for England is 13.35%).
- The economy is more dependent on agriculture, real estate, business activity and education than it is on manufacturing compared with both the West Midlands region and England as a whole.
- High proportion of population qualified to NVQ Level 4 or higher in comparison with national levels:

Proportion of the population aged 16-64 qualified to NVQ Level 4 or higher <sup>71</sup>	
Area	% in 2010
Malvern Hills	45.7
Worcestershire	29.4
West Midlands	26.0
England	31.1

### Special features

- An attractive environment for low impact industries and a skilled workforce.
- A desirable place in which to live and work.
- Malvern is the home of some of Britain’s best cyber experts<sup>72</sup>.
- A relatively high proportion of home workers (15.55% works mainly from home compared with a West Midlands average of 8.94%).
- A number of highly engaged communities within the AONB who are actively influencing their environment, for example through Village Design Statements and Community Plans.

### Key issues

#### Changes in communities (LWO1, LWP3, FP8, RP6)

- 3.12. Communities change when they lose shops, services, facilities and public transport. Young people, in particular, leave rural communities to seek work and affordable homes in towns. The number of retired people resident in the AONB is relatively high, and this trend is likely to increase.

#### Lack of affordable housing (LWP4)

- 3.13. The cost of homes is an important issue in rural areas. People on low wages cannot afford to pay the high prices professional and retired people are willing to pay. Average house prices in Herefordshire (£239,753) and Worcestershire (£235,391)

<sup>71</sup> Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011. Annual Population Survey

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.lepnetwork.org.uk/worcestershire-leading-the-global-fight-against-cyber-crime.html>

are higher than those in the West Midlands (£192,322) but less than in the UK as a whole (£245,076). In Gloucestershire (£259,042), they are higher than the UK average. This masks more local differences. Average house prices in the Forest of Dean (£230,756) are lower but in Malvern Hills District they are high (£260,809)<sup>73</sup>. As income levels for residents in Herefordshire (median £466.50 per week) are less than the average for GB (£552.70)<sup>74</sup>, affordability is a key issue, especially for those on low incomes who want to remain in the area.

- 3.14. It is particularly important that people who work within, manage the rural environment and conserve the special qualities of the AONB are able to find a base in the area. There is a need to provide affordable housing within the AONB. However, this should not be at the expense of landscape character. Local authorities complete 'need assessments' for affordable housing and reflect the findings in their local plan. However, when evidence is developed at the county level the needs of each parish are not always identified. There is a risk that too few affordable houses will be built in the AONB without proactive intervention. Local planning authorities should support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs, and consider whether allowing some market housing on these sites would help to facilitate this.<sup>75</sup>

### **Litter and fly-tipping (IP1)**

- 3.15. Local residents rate litter, fly tipping and dumped cars as major detractors from the beauty of the landscape. Ever stricter waste disposal regulations and the charges imposed on disposers of waste mean that the illegal dumping of rubbish in rural areas can be a significant problem. Casual litter dropping, particularly of food packaging, are also problems at car parks and along some public paths.

### **Large carbon footprints (LWO1, LWP2, LWP3)**

- 3.16. Despite some improvements, the area has a much larger carbon footprint than other areas. For example, data from 2006 showed that residents of Malvern Hills District emit more carbon dioxide per dwelling than almost any other part of Britain (it is sixth out of a list of 386 local authority areas). Figures suggest it has also had the largest ecological footprint (the land needed to sustain our current lifestyle) in the West Midlands.<sup>76</sup>

### **Lack of awareness of the AONB (LWP1, IP3)**

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<sup>73</sup> UK House Price Index England: June 2018 Published 15 August 2018  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-house-price-index-england-june-2018/uk-house-price-index-england-june-2018>

<sup>74</sup> ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis (2017): Labour Market Profile from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157169/report.aspx>

<sup>75</sup> Para 77, National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018)

<sup>76</sup> Vision 21 - The Malvern Hills Partnership Our Future Together: *A sustainable community strategy for Malvern Hills District 2006 - 2021*, Malvern Hills District Council, (2006)

- 3.17. Although there is a high awareness of the Malvern Hills, many people in the community are unaware of the AONB and its special qualities, or their impact on it. A 2018 visitor survey on the Malvern Hills revealed that just x% of people mentioned the AONB when asked which designations were relevant to the area. There is also a perception amongst some that the designation prevents growth and holds back the economy. Involving the community in managing the area can help people to develop a strong sense of place for the AONB and a greater understanding of its significance.

### **Variable coverage in telecommunications (LWP3)**

- 3.18. Modern telecommunications, including access to high-speed broadband, are vitally important to a successful rural economy. There are parts of the AONB that suffer from poor or no mobile phone reception. BT Openreach is committed to improving communications in protected landscapes in ways that protect and enhance their special qualities<sup>77</sup>. The first 5G mast in the area is due to be erected on the Malvern Hills Science Park in late 2018.
- 3.19. Superfast broadband makes home life more fun, connected and productive. It opens up a vast world of learning and entertainment; provides better, cheaper and easier ways to keep in touch with friends and family across the world; and creates opportunities to work and learn successfully from home, revolutionising our lives. Superfast broadband can help transform existing businesses and enable new start-ups to get established. Reliable and consistent connectivity can boost productivity, even at the busiest times, regardless of the number of users online, and make it possible to build new business contacts around the world. It also has a crucial role to play in reducing travel. This will help to improve tranquillity and the quality of many recreational experiences in the AONB.
- 3.20. The government is supporting investment to provide superfast broadband (speeds of 24Mbps or more) to as many premises as possible beyond the 95% level achieved in December 2017 and has provided universal access to basic broadband (speeds of at least 2Mbps). It is introducing a broadband Universal Service Obligation so that by 2020 everyone across the UK will have a right to request high speed broadband, though users may have to contribute to the cost of developing the network. In addition, the Government is stimulating private investment in full fibre connections across the whole of the UK by 2021; with speeds up to 1000Mbps<sup>78</sup>. Again, users may have to contribute to the cost.

Herefordshire Council and Gloucestershire County Council have joined forces and set up 'Fastershire<sup>79</sup>', to bring faster broadband to the two counties, with support from central government. The aim is that by the end of 2020 there will be access to

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<sup>77</sup> Fibre Optic Broadband - DRAFT 'Joint Accord' between Openreach, National Parks England, National Parks Wales, and the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (2013)

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/broadband-delivery-uk>

<sup>79</sup> <http://www.fastershire.com/>

fast broadband for all who need it. Superfast Worcestershire<sup>80</sup> is a programme to bring superfast broadband to 96% of homes and businesses in the county by the end of 2019. The network is transforming broadband speeds across Worcestershire, especially its rural areas.

Objectives		Policies	
LWO1	Enable vibrant communities to grow by stimulating diverse and sustainable economic prosperity while conserving and enhancing the distinctive character of the area.	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.
		LWP2	Support community initiatives that promote the creation and management of key habitats, appropriate renewable energy schemes, energy efficiency, recycling, community transport and 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.
<b>Illustrative actions:</b>			
Develop model housing policies for adoption in Neighbourhood Development Plans			
Raise awareness of 'carbon footprint' issues and opportunities			

## Built development

### Background

- 3.21. Development is inevitable and necessary to the AONB. It maintains economic viability, sustains the population and supports those who manage the land. To maintain the area's special qualities, it is vital that a framework exists to manage this

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.superfastworcestershire.com/>

change effectively and sympathetically. The principal elements of this are the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>81</sup> and the Local Development Plans. Applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the Local Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 3.22. The National Planning Policy Framework does not change the legal status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Local planning authorities are also tasked to take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and to plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries. The NPPF requires that great weight be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. Care must be taken to minimise the adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make. Designated heritage assets are also required to have strong protection<sup>82</sup>.
- 3.23. Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Parishes and neighbourhood forums can use neighbourhood planning to:
- set planning policies through neighbourhood plans to determine decisions on planning applications; and
  - grant planning permission through Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order.
- 3.24. A number of parish councils in the AONB have either prepared or are preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans.<sup>83</sup> The AONB Unit often works closely with councils in the preparation of these plans to ensure that they help to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.
- 3.25. The AONB management plan aims to be complementary to the current structure of frameworks, strategies and plans. However, its task is also to set out specific objectives and policies that help to maintain the integrity of the AONB as a clearly defined area of national landscape importance.

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<sup>81</sup> National Planning Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ISBN: 978-1-4098-5302-2 (July 2018)

<sup>82</sup> Paragraphs 171, 172, 195 & 197, National Planning Policy Framework.

<sup>83</sup> Localism Act 2011 and Para 29, National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018)

- 3.26. The AONB Management is a material consideration in planning.<sup>84</sup> Relevant authorities also have a legal duty to have regard to matters that might affect the AONB and this can include those within its setting<sup>85</sup>. In addition, the new national planning policy continues to give great weight to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important factors. The policy direction is to refuse planning permission for major developments in AONBs unless there is a prime public interest<sup>86</sup>. Being such a valuable landscape, the environmental effects of new proposals will be a major concern. But people must be able to live and work in the area; their social and economic needs are also a factor.
- 3.27. Not all land use and management activities come under the planning system. Many agricultural and forestry actions do not need planning permission. Nevertheless, this management plan seeks to influence such activities for the good of the AONB on behalf of the nation. The AONB Partnership has published a suite of guidance, for example, on how to conserve and enhance the landscape and how to ensure that the impacts of keeping horses are positive<sup>87</sup>.

### Special features

- Rural character and scale of settlements contribute to local distinctiveness, landscape character and sense of tranquillity.
- High-quality built environment characterised by numerous distinctive features, such as settlement patterns, landmark buildings, garden layouts, boundary elements and planting traditions.
- Interested and active local communities engaged in community planning initiatives in the AONB.

### Key issues

#### Allocating land for development (BDP1, BDP14)

- 3.28. The allocation of land for new development within and adjacent to the AONB has not always been preceded by a proper consideration of its effects on landscape character and visual amenity. This can lead to developments that compromise the integrity of the AONB and people's enjoyment of this nationally designated landscape. There are initiatives to address this, such as the South Worcestershire Councils landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study and the Natural Capital Planning Tool. This tool allows an assessment of the likely impact of proposed plans and

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<sup>84</sup> National Planning Policy Guidance Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 8-004-20140306 (2014)

<sup>85</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Section 85 – "In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty".

<sup>86</sup> From para 172, National Planning Policy Framework.

<sup>87</sup> Guidance on Keeping Horses in the Landscape, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership 2010

developments on the natural and cultural capital of the AONB and the services they provide.

### **Shortage of affordable housing (BDO1, BDP2, BDP6, LWP1, LWP4)**

- 3.29. The Government proposes to boost housing supply and, over the long term, create a more efficient housing market whose outcomes more closely match the needs and aspirations of all households; and which supports wider economic prosperity<sup>88</sup>. The drive to build ever more houses is more relevant to the countryside around urban areas but there are implications for the AONB.
- 3.30. Affordable housing needs are sometimes addressed through the exceptions policies in key local planning documents. This allows for development on sites that would not otherwise be available for housing. The management plan supports this approach. However, all new housing should be sensitively located and designed. Housing for local people needs additional protection to maintain that use in the future. However, land values can be volatile and private builders may lack the confidence to invest. There is a risk that too few affordable houses will be built in the AONB without proactive intervention.

### **Lack of consistency in development proposals in the AONB (BDO1, BDP3)**

- 3.31. The AONB covers a number of administrative areas. There is a need to coordinate policy to make sure that it is consistent across the area. This is best achieved through the AONB Management Plan. All relevant Local Development Plans now recognise the need for development proposals to be informed by this document. The approach to major developments that could affect the AONB landscape and its setting needs to be consistent. Cross boundary developments also need to be coordinated. Examples include green infrastructure and transport projects.

### **Reflecting landscape and historic character in new development (BDP2, BDP21, LP1, HP2)**

- 3.32. The local authorities have now developed planning tools, such as Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisations, for the whole of the AONB. Such tools have not always been well used in the past. In part, this is because they have not been widely available or well promoted. In dealing with applications for development, local planning authorities must take into account the landscape and historic character of the area and the identified threats to it.

### **Protecting views and the setting of the Malvern Hills AONB (BDP4, BDP14)**

- 3.33. The Malvern Hills are very visible in the wider landscape and the higher ground of the AONB often affords good views out. The contribution of setting to the significance of the AONB is often expressed by reference to views. Development or change such

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<sup>88</sup> The Government calls for 300,000 new dwellings pa - Department for Communities and Local Government, Fixing our broken housing market, Cm Paper 9352 HMSO, February 2017

as the construction of poorly oriented and coloured structures may harm people's enjoyment of the area. In addition, inappropriate development adjacent to the AONB can influence landscape character within the designation, for example through associated noise and disturbance. Planning policy and decisions on planning applications should take account of the importance of the setting of the AONB, including views (both short and long distance) to and from the AONB. The AONB Partnership has produced guidance on identifying and grading views and viewpoints and on development visible in views.

### **Loss of Local distinctiveness in the built environment (BDO1, BDP2, BDP20, BDP21, LWP1, IP5)**

- 3.34. There are many different styles of building that give character and distinctiveness to different parts of the area. Lack of attention to issues such as local design, layout, scale and materials can harm the special qualities of the AONB and diminish the distinctiveness of the built environment. The loss of specimen trees, stone walls, hedgerows and other landscape elements associated with development can also degrade local character and distinctiveness. The AONB Partnership has produced guidance on building design to show how new development can make a positive contribution to the natural beauty of the AONB.

### **The cumulative impacts of development (BDP13)**

- 3.35. One of the biggest threats to the AONB comes from the cumulative impact of numbers of small developments. Every change of appearance or use of property in the AONB has the potential to have either a positive or negative effect. For example, the replacement of a locally distinctive property boundary with ubiquitous close board fencing may not have a big impact in itself but a number of such actions will erode local character over time. Planning policy and development control decision-making needs to reflect this fact. Some minor building works do not require an application for planning permission but proceed as 'permitted development'. It is much harder to control such changes but the local planning authority can remove some of these consents through Article 4 Directives if it perceives a particular harm.

### **The reuse and redevelopment of existing buildings (BDP11)**

- 3.36. The NPPF encourages the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings<sup>89</sup>. The diversification and re-use of redundant rural buildings for economic activities that sustain the local economy and benefits the communities of the AONB is to be welcomed provided it conserves and enhances natural beauty. However, some farm diversification proposals risk industrialisation of the countryside and a loss of tranquillity. Due to the scale and nature of their effects, some development activities are likely to be better located outside of the AONB and its setting.

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<sup>89</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2018 para 148

### **Loss of character through infilling (BDO1, BDP2, BDP6)**

- 3.37. General planning policy favours building on previously developed sites and filling gaps in settlements. Such development needs to respect local character, design and the pattern and grain of settlements. Whilst increases in density can help to conserve land resources this will not always be appropriate or acceptable.
- 3.38. Traditional orchards within settlements and at the settlement edge are often at risk from development. Traditional orchards are priority wildlife habitats and significant cultural heritage features. They may also contribute positively to meeting current community needs and aspirations. Permission for development should usually be refused on these sites in the AONB.

### **Impacts of agricultural buildings and infrastructure (BDO1, BDP2, BDP5, BDP9)**

- 3.39. Planning rules that govern the need for permission for agricultural buildings are complex. There is a limited range of exemptions and various works can proceed using a 'prior notification' system, rather than the full planning application process.
- 3.40. Agricultural buildings are often located in areas of open countryside, where permission for other buildings is hard to obtain. Their construction and refurbishment can have an effect on the rural landscape and on people's enjoyment of it. There is a need to make sure that such buildings and any associated access are appropriately sited, scaled and designed.
- 3.41. This also applies to other agricultural operations, such as the creation of bodies of water for irrigation. Large water bodies are not a characteristic feature of the AONB. However, the need for reliable sources of water for agriculture may grow if summers become hotter and drier and it is recognised that winter storage of water can benefit local wildlife. Extreme care in the scale, siting and design of such features is essential if they are to fit well into the landscape and make a valuable overall contribution to the AONB.
- 3.42. A key issue in the local area is the use of plastic to expedite the growth of vegetables and polytunnels for soft fruit, due to their visual impacts and/or effects on the landscape character of the AONB. The landscape and visual effects of plastic used as a mulch to warm the soil may be reduced if it is visible for a short period. Poly tunnels are a form of development and their effects are spread over a much longer period. Very few locations within the AONB are likely to be able to accommodate polytunnel developments of any significant scale without detrimental effects on landscape character and/or visual amenity. Any proposed polytunnel development in or affecting the AONB (including those in the AONB setting and those particularly visible from high ground) should be scrutinised very closely. The

Herefordshire Council Polytunnels Planning Guide (2018)<sup>90</sup> makes it clear that where polytunnel development is proposed and economic benefits are being weighed against landscape impact, priority will be afforded to protecting the natural beauty of the AONB. A coordinated approach on this issue should be sought between the three local planning authorities.

### **Impact of equestrian developments (BDP2, BDP7)**

- 3.43. Keeping horses for business and leisure purposes appears to have increased in the AONB in recent years. Unless there is an agricultural purpose, the use of land for keeping horses requires planning permission.
- 3.44. The effect of each individual request for planning permission or change of use may be limited but the cumulative effect can lead to the loss of landscape character. For example, through new buildings, tracks, field sub-divisions, shelters and lighting. Local policies must address these effects.

### **Need for sustainable design (BDP2, RP5)**

- 3.45. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work; and helps make development acceptable to communities. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics.<sup>91</sup>
- 3.46. The AONB provides an ideal opportunity to demonstrate best practice in sustainable design. Sustainable design and construction is concerned with implementing sustainable development at the scale of individual sites and buildings. It takes account of the resources used in construction, and of the environmental, social and economic impacts of the construction process itself; and the design and use of buildings. The importance of sustainability does not reduce or negate the need for development to be appropriate to its context. A highly sustainable design that does not 'fit' in the AONB landscape will be unacceptable.
- 3.47. The Home Quality Mark is a national standard for new homes, which uses a simple 5-star rating to provide impartial information on a new home's design, construction quality and running costs. It clearly indicates the overall expected costs, health and wellbeing benefits, and environmental footprint associated with living in the home. There is information on energy and water efficiency, ecological enhancement, waste management and the use of environmentally benign materials. Of particular interest is the well-being indicator. This considers such issues as ventilation, resilience to

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<sup>90</sup> See Herefordshire Council's guidance at [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14577/polytunnels\\_planning\\_guide\\_2018.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14577/polytunnels_planning_guide_2018.pdf)

<sup>91</sup> From Para 124 and 125 National Planning Policy Framework.

flooding and overheating, connectivity with local amenities, internal space as well as day-lighting.<sup>92</sup>

### **Finding the right renewable energy schemes (BDO1, BDP2, BDP8)**

- 3.48. The Government is legally bound to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% (from the 1990 baseline) by 2050<sup>93</sup>. It plans to do this by moving to a more energy efficient, low-carbon economy<sup>94</sup>. Power generation from renewable sources of energy is an important element in the development of a low-carbon economy. There is a range of technologies available producing electricity, heat or both. Without good design, their use in the AONB may harm the special character of the area, for example through their scale and through the introduction of extraneous elements in the landscape. Some technologies, such as large scale wind turbines, are not appropriate in the AONB.
- 3.49. The development of appropriate scale schemes that use core elements of the AONB landscape, such as its woodland, can be beneficial to the landscape. Many types of woodland are either under-managed or not managed at all. The demand for wood fuel should bring more woodland into active management. Conversely, the conversion of grassland into biomass crops may be less desirable if they add extraneous elements to the landscape that have significant effects.

### **The development of fracking in the AONB (BDO1, BDP2, GP1)**

- 3.50. Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, is the process of extracting natural gas from shale rock layers deep within the earth. Fracking makes it possible to produce natural gas extraction in shale plays that were once unreachable with conventional technologies. Recent advancements in drilling technology have led to new manmade hydraulic fractures in shale plays that were once not available for exploration. The procedure attracts criticism from some environmental groups that fear it will lead to earthquakes and pollution of water sources. The fracking regulations<sup>95</sup> define an AONB as a 'protected area'. These regulations ensure that the process of hydraulic fracturing can only take place below 1200 metres. It is unlikely that there will be a site in the AONB but any proposal must be assessed on its own merit, based on a thorough assessment of effects such as new structures, noise and construction traffic which are likely to be detrimental to the special character of the AONB and its setting.

### **Lack of local stone and materials (BDP20)**

- 3.51. Currently, mineral extraction in the AONB is largely prohibited by mineral plan policies, other than in exceptional circumstances. A lack of local building materials can make it difficult to restore characteristic features, such as walls and buildings and to impart character to new development. Materials brought in can be costly to

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<sup>92</sup> See Building Research Establishment at <http://www.homequalitymark.com/>

<sup>93</sup> Climate Change Act 2008

<sup>94</sup> The Carbon Plan Department of Energy & Climate Change, 2011

<sup>95</sup> The Onshore Hydraulic Fracturing (Protected Areas) Regulations 2016

transport and can increase the carbon cost of development. Systems to recycle and re-use local materials need to be initiated or expanded. The use of loose material in former quarries and the limited winning of new materials should be considered where this helps to meet conservation objectives, does not impact on special features and is subject to all relevant consenting procedures. This does not apply to 'naturally occurring' loose materials, for example those derived from erosion that is not the result of human activity, which should not be used. Control is through the Minerals Local Plans being developed by the County Councils.

- 3.52. Timber grown locally is a valuable building material. Where appropriate, its use would cut the need to import materials from outside the area and support local businesses.

### **Tranquillity (BDP5, TRP6)**

- 3.53. Tranquillity is the quality of calm experienced in places with mainly natural features and activities, free from disturbance from manmade ones. It is one of the AONB's special qualities. Tranquillity is important for mental and physical well-being. It improves the quality of life. Power lines, masts, cars, roads, light pollution and building developments can erode tranquillity. The effects of new development on tranquillity, and the cumulative effects of such developments, need to be carefully assessed and considered<sup>96</sup>

### **Light pollution (BDP5, BDP12)**

- 3.54. Parts of the AONB are still some of the few places in England where it is possible to appreciate the night sky without the intrusive effects of light pollution. Even so, light spillage is affecting some of the area. Light pollution occurs when artificial light shines where it is neither wanted nor needed. In broad terms, there are three types of light pollution:
- skyglow – the pink or orange glow we see for miles around towns and cities, spreading deep into the countryside, caused by a scattering of artificial light by airborne dust and water droplets
  - glare – the uncomfortable brightness of a light source
  - light intrusion – light spilling beyond the boundary of the property on which a light is located, sometimes shining through windows and curtains.<sup>97</sup>
- 3.55. Light pollution affecting the night skies over the AONB is the result of skyglow from towns and cities as well as from light sources within the AONB. There is no legal requirement to provide public lighting but some people feel that street lighting within rural settlements is an important safety feature. Poorly designed and placed lampposts can be visually intrusive in daylight. Highly reflective signs are less visually intrusive than illuminated signs. Street lighting affects wildlife. For example,

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<sup>96</sup> From Para 180 National Planning Policy Framework.

<sup>97</sup> CPRE (June 2016) Night Blight: Mapping England's light pollution and dark skies

bats exploit low light levels and bright light disorientates them<sup>98</sup>. Local highway authorities should identify areas with severe light pollution and target action to reduce it, such as investing in dimming technology, running part-night lighting schemes (in consultation with the local community) or replacing street lighting with less light polluting types. There are good examples of this approach in Herefordshire.

3.56. The need for external lighting for buildings, car parks and recreation grounds needs careful assessment on a case-by-case basis. Planning policies should aim to minimise the impact of light pollution from artificial light inside the AONB<sup>99</sup> but should also address sources of pollution that originate outside of the area and affect the designation.

3.57. The Three Counties Showground – the Three Counties Showground is a vitally important economic facility occupying a significant area of ground in a very visible part of the Malvern Hills AONB. Due to this high visibility and huge popularity – which further increases its visual prominence due to mass car parking and the demand for additional infrastructure – it is necessary to develop a master plan for the site. This plan should set out key principles for development, landscaping etc. with a view to effectively integrating the site into its special landscape setting.

Objectives		Policies	
BDO1	The distinctive character and natural beauty of the AONB will be fully reflected in the development and implementation of consistent statutory land use planning policy and guidance across the AONB, and in decision-making on planning applications for 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.
		BDP2	Development in the AONB and its setting should be in accordance with good practice guidance including that produced by the AONB Partnership.
		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.
		BDP4	Development proposals that may affect land in the AONB,

<sup>98</sup> Alison Fure, Bats and lighting in The London Naturalist, No. 85, 2006

<sup>99</sup> From Para 180 National Planning Policy Framework.

			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.
		BDP5	Lighting schemes should be kept to a minimum and only installed where absolutely necessary. Light pollution should be avoided through 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.
		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.
		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 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.
		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

### Background

- 3.58. The area now known as the Malvern Hills AONB has attracted visitors for many years. The Victorians promoted the local springs in the Malvern Hills area for their purity and healing properties. This transformed Malvern and its surrounds into a fashionable spa resort. The popularity of Great Malvern grew again when Barry Jackson brought music and theatre festivals into the area, with George Bernard Shaw and Edward Elgar amongst the performers. Each year, some 1.25 million visitors come to the AONB to enjoy its natural and cultural heritage<sup>100</sup>. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy.
- 3.59. The nature and intensity of tourism varies across the AONB. Certain locations can be very busy. These include the Three Counties Showground, the northern and central Hills near Malvern and Eastnor Castle. In other areas, visitor pressure can be very light. The greatest range and pressure of visitor use is largely restricted to the 12 square kilometres of the northern and central Malvern Hills, reflecting the dramatic beauty and accessibility of this area. The most pronounced impacts of tourism are concentrated within a relatively small area of what is a small AONB.
- 3.60. The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty has signed a sustainable tourism accord with Defra and Visit England. This is intended to complement and work with the England Strategic Framework for Tourism 2010-2020. The accord acknowledges the importance of AONBs as being at the centre of the development of sustainable rural tourism.<sup>101</sup> Local authorities in Herefordshire and Worcestershire support tourism strategies that recognise the importance of AONBs as special landscapes and as important destinations for people seeking the natural environment. The strategies also recognise the need to preserve these assets, to enhance the quality of the environment and to support visitor management and regulation initiatives that help to deliver sustainability in the tourism sector. The Malvern Hills AONB Partnership has also agreed a Tourism Position Statement<sup>102</sup>.

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<sup>100</sup> Malvern Hills AONB Visitor Survey 1999-2000, Heart of England Tourist Board 2000

<sup>101</sup> Working Towards Sustainable Tourism in England's AONBs, Defra, Visit England, NAAONB (2013)

<sup>102</sup> Agreed by the Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee in December 2012.

- 3.61. Tourism and recreation are often confused. They are not the same. The Office of National Statistics defines tourism as "A movement of people to places outside their usual place of residence, pleasure being the usual motivation<sup>103</sup>". Recreation is an activity carried out in spare time. It may form a component of a tourist experience but does not require an overnight stay.

### Special features

- Visitor attractions such as The Three Counties showground and historic buildings such as Eastnor Castle.
- Villages and market towns such as Ledbury (partly within the AONB boundary).
- Established trails and routes, such as the Elgar route, the Cider Trail, the Geopark Way, Literary Guide and Discovery Walks.
- A range of cultural features and attractions including art, theatre, music, literature and gastronomy.

### Key issues

#### Low visitor spend (TO1, TP2)

- 3.62. Visit England report that in 2017, British residents made 1,505 million day trips in England, totalling 310 million nights away from home, with expenditure of £50,899 million. British residents took 120.7 million overnight tourism trips to destinations in England, spending £23,683 million during these trips. Spending per trip was **£189**; with the average spend per night at £64 per person. The number of domestic overnight trips taken in England declined by 0.4% between 2011 and 2017; but the amount spent rose by 2.3%. Hereford and Worcester received 189,063 international visits in 2017. The total expenditure was £62.68 million; with an average spend per visit of **£332**.<sup>104</sup>
- 3.63. Visitor surveys show that the vast majority of tourists visiting Herefordshire (90% in 2014-2016) and Worcestershire (94.5% in 2014-2016) are day-trippers. Day visitors put far less income into the local economy (28.5% of visitor economy) than those who stay overnight<sup>105</sup>. Generating greater overnight stays is a key aim of tourism strategies for the area.

#### Poor visitor awareness (TP5, IP4)

- 3.64. Many people have heard of Malvern, Malvern Water and/or the Malvern Hills. However, awareness of the nationally protected landscape of the AONB and of the tourism offer in the wider area is less well known. A recent visitor survey on the Malvern Hills found that just **x %** of respondents named the AONB when asked

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<sup>103</sup> Measuring Tourism Locally Guidance Note One: Definitions of Tourism, Tourism Intelligence Unit, The Office for National Statistics (2010)

<sup>104</sup> <http://www.visitengland.org/insight-statistics/>

<sup>105</sup> A Tourism Strategy for Herefordshire 2010 – 2015 by Stevens and Associates for Herefordshire Council (2010)

which other forms of protection or designation applied to the hills. This may be in part because of historical marketing activities that have focussed on specific attractions and on counties rather than the area as a whole.

- 3.65. In recent years, more effort has been made to market the Malverns as a destination in its own right, but cross-boundary promotion of the AONB including, for example, the towns of Malvern and Ledbury is more limited. One exception is the AONB Map and Guide produced by the AONB Partnership and supported by a number of local businesses. Effective cross boundary promotion, and providing tourists with the information to build quality experiences will help to turn days into stays.
- 3.66. A need for more up-to-date information on the numbers, activities, needs and aspirations of visitors was identified in the last AONB Management Plan (2014-19). This need has been addressed, at least in part, in recent years. A Malvern Hills District visitor survey was conducted in 2015/16 and a survey of visitor use on the Malvern Hills and Commons took place in 2018, commissioned by the Malvern Hills Trust and AONB Partnership.

#### **Need for sustainable tourism (TP4)**

- 3.67. Sustainable tourism is about taking action to minimise any harmful effects. It is also about maximising the local benefits that tourism can bring to the environment, economy and community. For example, businesses can save money through energy efficiency and may improve their offer to clients by helping to enhance the environment, provide good information and support local projects. There is a need to raise awareness and to engage the local tourism industry and key stakeholders in sustainability.
- 3.68. Obvious partnerships to nurture in the AONB are those between organisations that conserve the natural and cultural heritage and those whose business thrive on it. There are models to link potential partners with their natural market, the visitor, through ‘visitor giving’ schemes. Visit England produces a toolkit<sup>106</sup> for destination management organisations that sets out the essential steps and what works. Such schemes can make very effective marketing tools and help conserve natural beauty.
- 3.69. Accreditation is one way to promote and demonstrate sustainable credentials. Tourism businesses use accreditation so that visitors can choose quality and know what to expect. Protected areas such as National Parks and AONBs can also become accredited through schemes such as the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. This demonstrates that such areas are meeting agreed requirements for the sustainable development and management of tourism. Accreditation is not the only way to demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. Other schemes exist which

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<sup>106</sup> Visitor Giving toolkit for Destination Organisations, nurlakeland for VisitEngland 2013

allow areas and businesses to add value and promote themselves to a wide audience.

**Weak links between the rural economy and the tourism industry (TP1, TP3)**

- 3.70. Links between farming and forestry management and the tourism industry in the AONB are sometimes poorly developed. There is a small range of locally distinct and locally sourced produce available. It is not extensive and there is scope to expand the range (see Farming and Forestry). Sustainable tourism businesses are likely to want to promote local produce. Effective marketing for tourism will also have spin-off benefits for other sectors by building a positive image of area.

**Quality and integrity of the public realm (TP3, TRP1, TRP3)**

- 3.71. The quality of the public realm – the streets, public buildings, car parks, and public toilets – should all reflect and live up to the quality of the natural environment. These things might not make someone visit the AONB but they are likely to detract from the experience and reflect badly on the area if they are not up to scratch. Public realm is as important to residents as it is to visitors and it needs to be right, both within and adjacent to the AONB.

Objectives		Policies	
TO1	To ensure the AONB is widely recognised and valued as a sustainable visitor destination, where local communities benefit, businesses prosper and the environment is well managed.	TP1	Stimulate and support sustainable tourism practices in the AONB
		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 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.
<b>Illustrative action:</b>			
Raise awareness of the AONB and promote the AONB and adjoining areas as a sustainable destination in its own right.			

## Transport and Accessibility

### Background

- 3.72. The Malvern Hills AONB currently benefits from good accessibility by a wide range of modes of transport. This includes the M5 and M50 motorways, which bring the populations of the South West and West Midlands close to the AONB. Several main roads cut through or skirt the Malvern Hills. There is a significant network of rural lanes, which can sometimes be heavily used by visitor traffic. Several car parks and informal verge parking contribute to easy access of the AONB. In particular, this is around the northern and central Malvern Hills.
- 3.73. There are four rail stations within or close to the AONB. These stations all benefit from regular and direct services between London, Birmingham and Hereford. A fifth, Worcestershire Parkway Interchange is under construction and is due to open in 2019. It will greatly improve rail connectivity by linking the local rail network to the Cross Country network (Bristol-Birmingham-North West/North East). Long distance express coaches serve the AONB. There are direct connections to London, Birmingham, Cardiff and a number of other major national destinations.
- 3.74. With reductions in the availability of public funding, many local bus services have been rationalised or cut altogether. The frequency and reach of the local bus network is in decline, particularly in more sparsely populated rural areas.
- 3.75. As bus services have declined, the provision of Community Transport services has increased significantly to meet local demand. All communities in and around the Malvern Hills AONB are now covered by Community Transport services in the form of Community Buses and Voluntary Car schemes. These are demand-responsive and are available to both local residents and visitors for whom there is no suitable bus service for their particular journey. The AONB Partnership has helped to support the establishment of car share schemes and electric bike hire in the area. The Malvern Hills Car Clubs now offer 15 vehicles for hire across Ledbury, Malvern and the AONB. Therefore, accessibility by passenger transport has been maintained across the area.
- 3.76. Malvern, Ledbury and Newent have a number of registered taxi services, which provide door-to-door journeys across the area. Local fares are reasonably priced, although higher than bus services.
- 3.77. Travel Concession Authorities (the three county councils) are required to implement the mandatory travel concession as set out in the Transport Act 2000 and amended by the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007. This gives national free travel for older

people<sup>107</sup> and those with certain disabilities. The authorities are required to offer free travel on any local bus service in England at all times on Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays and between 0930 and 2300 on any other day. Bus Pass holders can get a reduction of between £1 and £2 per single journey on Community Transport and Dial-a-Ride schemes that affiliate to the Concessionary Travel Scheme.

- 3.78. Freight traffic in the AONB is relatively light. However, the number of HGVs and other light freight vehicles is growing, in line with national trends and local growth is apparent. There are unlikely to be opportunities to transfer freight from road to rail in the near future. However, such schemes would be likely to win support where they benefit tranquillity.
- 3.79. There are no designated Air Quality Management Areas in the AONB area, which suggests that air quality in the area remains broadly good.
- 3.80. Cycling is a very popular activity in the Malvern Hills AONB. There are plans to connect the AONB with the National Cycle Network through the development of NCN 46 (Worcester to Abergavenny). With the national growth experienced in touring cycling, the Malvern Hills AONB is ideally suited to attracting short and long-stay visitors by bicycle.
- 3.81. There are a number of walking and cycling guides available (some of which have been part-funded by the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership). They provide extensive information for walkers and cyclists intending to access the variety of landscapes. The Malvern Hills AONB is fortunate in having a dense network of well-maintained and attractive walking, cycling and horse riding routes that are either traffic free or low traffic.
- 3.82. The accessibility requirements and demands on the AONB are managed through the policies and programmes in the three Local Transport Authorities' Local Transport Plans. Each local authority has recently adopted its latest round of plans (LTP4). These documents aim to:
- improve access to key services;
  - integrate transport provision and infrastructure improvements; and
  - promote sustainable forms of transport.

### **Special features**

- Good rail and express coach access and regular services to and from the West Midlands, South Wales and the South West.

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<sup>107</sup> The age of eligibility for concessionary travel is the pensionable age for women; and for men, the pensionable age of a woman born on the same day.

- Good access by car throughout the Malvern Hills AONB, supported by significant car parking provision on the high hills and ridges of the northern and central Malvern Hills.
- A comprehensive network of rights of way.
- Rural character of minor roads defined by locally distinctive features such as hedgerows, cast iron road signs and milestones.
- Quiet rural lanes providing good opportunities for cycling and horse riding.
- ‘Miles Without Stiles’ footpaths and tracks with no barriers to access.

## Key issues

### Impacts of car traffic (TRO1, TRP2, TRP5)

- 3.83. A growth in car traffic is one of the main threats to the tranquillity of the Malvern Hills AONB. High levels of car use can also be associated with public safety concerns, damage to wildlife and inconvenience for local people, as well as contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.
- 3.84. The quality of road access to the AONB, and the existence of extensive car parking opportunities (many of them free), means access to the Malvern Hills AONB is generally by car. At peak times, the AONB can experience high levels of car traffic and a high demand for parking. This can be particularly acute around the hills at weekends and bank holidays as well as at popular locations such as the Three Counties Showground. During these times, there are public concerns around congestion, verge damage and disturbance to wildlife, local communities and other road users. There is also more noise and visual intrusion. Exhaust emissions may affect air quality. Most of these impacts have not been measured but could be significant.
- 3.85. A small network of traffic counters monitors traffic flows in different parts of the AONB. One or two counters are permanent and record data constantly; others are temporary and record data only at certain times of the year. Over time, data from these counters will help to show how traffic is changing. Between 2009 and 2018, counter data indicate that numbers of vehicles using parts of the AONB road network have either risen only slightly or remained more or less static. The level of use of the private car by local people (as opposed to visitors) to reach the hills and nearby countryside is not clear, although a recent visitor survey indicates that ..... A scheme that provides local people with reduced price car parking around the Malvern Hills and Commons offers good value for money to those who help to pay for the management of these areas through their council tax. However, this scheme does help to promote the car as a mode of transport for accessing these areas.
- 3.86. A significant area of concern at present is the growth of car traffic associated with significant new house building in the towns of Ledbury and Malvern that adjoin the AONB. As well as a larger population wanting to access the AONB for leisure

purposes it is feared that a growth in congestion in and around urban roads may also lead to an increase in people choosing to use the more minor roads of the AONB to travel to and from work.

- 3.87. The CPRE carried out tranquillity monitoring in 2006. This shows clearly that the least tranquil parts of the AONB are those associated with busy road corridors. Traffic has a large effect on tranquillity. One way to retain tranquillity is to keep volumes of traffic low on the rural road network. However, it is also recognised that some rural development opportunities may depend on an element of traffic increase. Appropriately managed reductions in speed limits and landscaping can also contribute to noise reduction in more sensitive areas.

#### **Impacts of freight traffic (TRO1, TRP2)**

- 3.88. Whilst freight traffic in the AONB is relatively light, developments in and close to the edge of the AONB, including at Blckmore Park, have brought additional HGV movements to the area. Demand for such growth may increase, especially associated with new employment/industrial land at the edge of urban areas where more HGV movements are likely to compound the effects of a growth in car-based traffic associated with a growing residential population. In the areas to the south of Malvern, future growth must also be seen in conjunction with high levels of traffic generated by activities at the Three Counties Showground. As with a growth in car traffic, effects are likely to include an erosion of tranquillity in the AONB and its setting and a potential reduction in the quality of the visitor experience. Vehicle movements at night are particularly intrusive, disturbing residents and wildlife alike.

#### **Poor facilities for walkers and cyclists (TRO1, TRP2, TRP4)**

- 3.89. There is a shortage of targeted provision for walkers and cyclists, especially in and around built up areas, within and outside the AONB. People need safer walking and cycling routes; and integrated public transport services. Shared use routes may also benefit horse riders.
- 3.90. Secure cycle parking provision in and around the AONB is sporadic, including at key destinations. This can act as a deterrent to cycling, due to concerns about cycle theft.

#### **Access to public transport (TRO1, TRP5, TRP7, IP1)**

- 3.91. For a rural area, the AONB has enjoyed a relatively good public transport system but bus services are now in decline. Some community transport services exist to help meet local demand. Unfortunately, due to lack of awareness of the existence of alternatives, some residents (particularly the old and the young) either rely heavily on private car use or may be left feeling isolated, seeing only a decline in bus services without an awareness of alternatives available. They rely heavily on private car use. One result is significant isolation for people who do not have access to a car.

- 3.92. There are other factors that put people off using public transport. These include cost if you do not have concessionary travel, convenience of services and standards of comfort. There are a number of registered taxi services, which provide door-to-door journeys across the Malvern Hills AONB area. Local fares are generally reasonably priced, although are higher than bus services.

### **Unsympathetic and inappropriate road improvement design and management (TRP1, TRP3, IP5)**

- 3.93. The character of the AONB and its special qualities can be damaged by unsympathetic road design and street furniture. The AONB Partnership and local Highway Authorities have worked together to develop a Highway Design guide for the AONB. The aim of the guidance is to make sure that the road signs and markings around the AONB are clear and fit for purpose in preventing accidents, whilst respecting the special character of the AONB. The unauthorised mowing of highway verges in front of properties can be detrimental to nature, including vital pollinators. The AONB Partnership has also worked to establish, for a trial period, a more conservation-friendly approach to the cutting of grass verges in one part of the area.

### **Cost of travel (TRP4)**

- 3.94. The most significant impacts of the costs of travel are on young people and low-income households. Many cannot afford to travel to work or education. However, in the Malvern Hills AONB, almost all low-income households are located within either Malvern or Ledbury, which have a range of transport services, health, employment, education, leisure and retail opportunities within reasonable walking or cycling distances.
- 3.95. People with disabilities may also suffer when faced with higher costs, though all those with registered mobility issues benefit from a range of measures including free or reduced price bus/community transport travel and the opportunity to have specially modified cars to deliver mobility<sup>108</sup>. This is due to limited transport choices. Fuel prices are rising.

<b>Objectives</b>		<b>Policies</b>	
TRO1	To reduce the impact of the motor vehicle whilst promoting a more sustainable approach to accessibility management.	TRP1	Highway management and design should be in accordance with the AONB Guidance on Highway Design.
		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.

<sup>108</sup> There are seven categories of disabled people who are entitled to the statutory minimum concession and these are set out in section 146 of the Transport Act 2000

		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.
		TRP7	Develop and promote sustainable transport options to meet local accessibility requirements.
<b>Illustrative actions:</b>			
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.			

## 4. Enjoying and understanding

### Introduction

- 4.1. The Malvern Hills area has long been valued for its wealth of opportunities for outdoor recreation and quiet enjoyment. These opportunities provide the means to explore and discover the richness of the natural beauty and historic interest of the AONB while at the same time contributing to physical and mental health and well-being. Tourists have flocked here to 'take the waters' since the early 1800s and Great Malvern's formal paths and rides give the nearby slopes the air of a Victorian pleasure garden. The ridge and hillside paths and the commons are traditional Midlands 'day trip' country. The AONB has the largest area of open common land in the West Midlands. There are over 1,200 hectares of open space, providing good walking, riding and excellent jumping off points for para-gliders. The Worcestershire Way footpath is an important recreation resource in the AONB. Together these

elements help to form the extensive “green infrastructure” of the AONB that provides significant economic, social and health benefits<sup>109</sup>.

- 4.2. The area boasts a wealth of heritage to find and study. The geological variety and thousands of years of traditional farming have given the AONB great ecological value. Herb-rich, unimproved pastures and native woodland support a wealth of habitats and species. It is also a historical landscape, the ridge is crowned by ancient hill forts, the most famous being the ditches and ramparts of British Camp. People get great enjoyment from visits to see these features. In addition, there is the potential for all to learn a little more about the area and its heritage.
- 4.3. Many people take pleasure in giving something back to the area they enjoy. Volunteers work hard to keep the area special. Their support is becoming even more valuable at a time when spending by public bodies is being reduced.
- 4.4. One of the main changes over the past 40 years has been the steadily rising numbers of people, mainly from urban areas, who visit the countryside for recreation. The range and type of activity has also diversified greatly. The AONB has been subject to increasing visitor pressures leading, for example, to erosion in popular parts of the Malvern Hills. Surveys have demonstrated that many visitors are unaware of both the AONB designation and of the natural resources within the AONB. A lack of appreciation of rural land management, farming, conservation practices and woodland management can lead to objections to local conservation work, which can be perceived as destructive. The Government’s commitment, through its Natural Environment White Paper<sup>110</sup>, to have “*by 2020 significantly more people engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking positive action*”, is recognition of the need to help people connect with their local heritage.

## **A vision for 2040**

### **Recreation and access**

- The AONB is an exemplar of sustainable enjoyment and recreation, based on its rich natural and cultural heritage.
- The recreational experience is of a high quality and is open to all in society.
- Peoples’ mental and physical wellbeing is enhanced through fresh air, open space and exercise.
- Peoples’ enjoyment and sustainable use of the AONB is well informed and respectful of local residents and land management practices.
- The rights of way network is easy to use and maintained to a very high level.
- People move easily between the open access land of the Hills and Commons and adjoining countryside.

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<sup>109</sup> “Benefits of green infrastructure.” Report to Defra and CLG. Forest Research, (2010)

<sup>110</sup> “Natural Choice – securing the value of nature” Defra (2011)

## Information

- A well-informed public that values the unique heritage of the AONB
- People are connected intellectually, emotionally and / or spiritually with the area.
- The AONB's heritage inspires passion, intrigue and fascination.
- Information tells a seamless story of the AONB, connecting the many different elements of the area's heritage.
- Information is based on sound scholarship and improves the visitor experience.
- Information provision meets the needs of people with various abilities, backgrounds, learning styles, and levels of experience

## Volunteering

- Trained, supported and sustainable volunteer teams work together to help deliver the Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan.
- Volunteering is recognized, celebrated and valued across the area.
- Volunteering is built around the strengths and assets that people can bring to the AONB.
- Volunteer opportunities exist for all sectors of society
- Investment in volunteering leads to improved quality, equity and action.

## Recreation and access

### Background

- 4.5. It is government's ambition to create a more physically active nation. It wants people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy the many benefits that sport and physical activity bring, at every stage in their lives.<sup>111</sup> An outdoor experience can benefit people's health, enable them to get closer to nature, be used as an educational opportunity or help with building community partnerships. Each year, some 1.25 million visitors come to the AONB to enjoy its natural and cultural heritage<sup>112</sup>. Many of those are local people enjoying their leisure time.
- 4.6. Mental ill-health is on the rise and in England; it is estimated that in any one year at least 1 in 4 people will experience a 'significant' mental health problem. In 2016, Natural England research demonstrated that taking part in nature-based activities helps people who are suffering from mental ill-health and can contribute to a reduction in levels of anxiety, stress, and depression. Their report suggests that green care interventions can provide an increasingly important and cost-effective way of supporting mental health services. The report focuses on the 3 main green care interventions that are currently helping people in England who have mental ill-

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<sup>111</sup> The Government (2015) Sporting Future - A New Strategy for an Active Nation

<sup>112</sup> Malvern Hills AONB Visitor Survey 1999-2000, Heart of England Tourist Board 2000

health: care farming; environmental conservation; and social and therapeutic horticulture.<sup>113</sup>

- 4.7. Green prescriptions can form a core part of achieving sustainability in the health system. Many providers of outdoor spaces are seeking to collaborate with healthcare and public health organisations to deliver safe, cost-effective outcomes for patients. Local natural outdoor spaces close to where people live provide huge untapped opportunities for improving health and wellbeing. Green prescriptions are a core aspect of social prescribing (referral of patients to local non-clinical services available in the community). Increasingly clinicians are referring patients to nature-based opportunities for a variety of long-term conditions.
- 4.8. Today, nearly a third of children aged 2 to 15 are overweight or obese, and younger generations are becoming obese at earlier ages and staying obese for longer. Reducing obesity levels can save lives as obesity doubles the risk of dying prematurely. Obese adults are seven times more likely to become a type 2 diabetic than adults of a healthy weight, which may cause blindness or limb amputation. And not only are obese people more likely to get physical health conditions like heart disease, they are also more likely to be living with conditions like depression. One way of combating this epidemic is to promote opportunities for exercise and this could lead to a higher level of outdoor activity.<sup>114</sup>
- 4.9. The nature and intensity of leisure use varies across the AONB. Most people visit the 12 square kilometres of the northern and central Malvern Hills, reflecting the dramatic beauty and accessibility of this area. There are plans for many new homes in South Worcestershire (in and around Malvern and the City of Worcester) as well as around Ledbury. As one of the iconic landscapes of the West Midlands, it is likely that there will be a higher level of demand for recreational activity on the Malvern Hills and in other parts of the AONB because of this growth.
- 4.10. Herefordshire Council, and Worcestershire and Gloucestershire County Councils, all produce Improvement Plans for their rights of way networks. These plans assess the adequacy of the network to meet current and future demands for walking, cycling and riding. They also provide aims and objectives for managing the network in the future.
- 4.11. Walking for health and recreation is a popular pastime and an excellent way to appreciate the countryside. There are a number of local initiatives to support access for all. For example, local authorities promote health walks and the Malvern Access Group publishes a guide for people who want to check the accessibility of shops and businesses before they visit them. It includes some countryside access.

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<sup>113</sup> Natural England (2016) A review of nature-based interventions for mental health care (NECR204)

<sup>114</sup> The Government: Childhood Obesity A Plan for Action 2016

- 4.12. 'Miles Without Stiles' are promoted footpaths and tracks which are suitable for use by those who do not want to clamber over barriers when out enjoying the countryside. Leaflets are available for routes in the parishes of Colwall, Cradley and Mathon. These routes were created by Herefordshire Council, in conjunction with Natural England and the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership.

### **Special features**

- Quiet rural lanes for walking, cycling and horse riding.
- Open access on foot and horseback across a large part of the Malvern Hills and Commons.
- Miles without Stiles routes across large parts of the AONB in Herefordshire
- The proximity to centres of population, principally Malvern and Ledbury.
- Opportunities to engage in a wide range of recreational activities, including angling, equestrian activities, hang gliding, kite flying, model gliding, sledging, cycling, abseiling, fossil hunting and walking.
- Opportunities to participate in well managed and appropriately scaled field sports.

### **Key Issues**

#### **Poor awareness of access rights (RO1)**

- 4.13. There is a very good rights of way network in the AONB that includes both public footpaths and bridleways. On the Malvern Hills, this network is underpinned by a system of open access for walkers and horse riders on land controlled by the Malvern Hills Trust. These arrangements can lead to confusion over access rights in the transition zone between statutory rights of way and open access land. A map and guide recently produced by the Malvern Hills Trust helps to reduce this confusion by showing the position of bridleways and pedestrian routes. It is important that people understand access rights.

#### **Variable standards of path repair (RP2, RP3)**

- 4.14. In some parts of the AONB, a footpath or track may be one of the most obvious signs of human activity in an otherwise 'natural' setting. Overly formalised and heavily engineered paths can jar in such locations. By contrast, paths that have been sympathetically designed and managed can be a positive feature of the landscape. They are a pleasure to use. The Highway Authorities are obliged to keep rights of way in a condition suitable for their intended use and may be under pressure to complete a repair quickly. However, the AONB will benefit if works on paths and tracks is sensitive to the 'natural' setting.

#### **Recreational conflicts (RP1, RP4, TRP6)**

- 4.15. Mountain biking is popular on the Malvern Hills but there are no dedicated routes for use only by mountain bikes. Open access rights on Malvern Hills Trust land do not

extend to cyclists but cyclists do have rights to use designated bridleways on the Hills. Some riders use paths and tracks that they have no legal right to use. The 'Malverns by Mountain Bike' Campaign aims to encourage responsible mountain biking on the Hills and Commons. Recent initiatives include the publication of a map and guide, the creation of some permissive routes and some waymarked trails for mountain bikers.<sup>115</sup>

- 4.16. There are claims of conflict between mountain bikers and other users of the hills, although only a few accidents are reported. There is a shortage of hard data about recreational conflict and damage to the landscape.

#### **Poor accessibility (RO2, RP5, RP6, TRP7)**

- 4.17. For some people, particularly the less mobile, it is difficult to explore parts of the AONB. Standard practices sometimes create obstacles, like steps and stiles. There is a need to promote routes that are suitable for people with limited mobility. Wheelchair users, families with pushchairs and the visually impaired can then visit and enjoy the AONB. In some parts of the AONB, gates have replaced stiles and some easy access trails are in place to allow greater access for people with a wide range of physical abilities. In addition, visitors to the Malvern Hills Geocentre can now hire all terrain mobility scooters to enable them to access the northern hills. However, there is more to be done to make access easier and to promote this access.
- 4.18. Other factors also prevent people from exploring the countryside. It may be a lack of confidence, a lack of information and / or the costs of car parking. It is likely that such factors affect certain groups more than others. For example, a recent visitor survey on the Malvern Hills and Commons found that x% of respondents were from post codes x and y in Malvern whilst only A% were from post codes A. Efforts need to be made to ensure that the health and well-being benefits that come from being close to nature are available to all.

#### **Managing recreational impact (RP1, RP2, TRP6)**

- 4.19. Walking is one of the most popular activities on a leisure visit away from home (alongside seeing friends and eating and drinking out)<sup>116</sup>. As the local population rises, there may be more people and dogs on the hills and commons. This can lead to a range of impacts on the land and the wildlife it supports, for example, erosion of paths, creation of new paths/'desire lines' and disturbance to ground-nesting birds. Better data on levels of use and impacts is essential to help manage this change and to maintain the special qualities of the area.

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<sup>115</sup> See Malvern Hills Trust at <http://www.malvernhills.org.uk/media/1473/map-and-guide-website-page-1.pdf>

<sup>116</sup> GB Day Visitor Statistics 2011 published by VisitEngland 2012

- 4.20. There may be a need to create and promote new opportunities for countryside access. This is more sustainable if accessible green space and access is close to where people live and work. This may help to alleviate local pressures. Private landowners have a valuable role to play in reducing pressure on ‘honey pot’ sites. They can provide a welcoming experience to visitors on the many rights of way and permissive paths in the area. For example, planning permission for a new visitor centre and café at Eastnor has recently been granted.

**Increasing traffic volume on quiet roads (RP1, RP6, TRP5, TRO2, TRP1, IP2)**

- 4.21. Many of the AONB’s small rural roads are used for walking, cycling and horse riding. These are some of the most tranquil parts of the AONB. New development, or changes to the highway network, could result in increasing volumes of traffic on these rural roads, which could compromise the tranquillity of the network and discourage their use for quiet recreational enjoyment. At the same time, many rural businesses and farms rely on road transport.

**Car parking availability (RP1, TRP7)**

- 4.22. Car parking around the northern and central Malvern Hills provides easy access to the ridge and other walks. There are only limited parking spaces elsewhere in the AONB. This is especially true in the villages; where visitors could help to support the local economy. There is scope to manage visitors to reduce their impact on the ridge and ‘spread the load’ to other paths and areas within the AONB. This needs to be balanced with the wish to maintain areas of tranquillity.

**Need for coordinated signage (RP2, TRP3, IP5)**

- 4.23. Good way marking and signage of the rights of way network can serve many valuable purposes. It prevents people from getting lost and ensures that they do not inadvertently stray and interfere with land management practices. However, an excess of signs detracts from the enjoyment of the open countryside. The use of different types of sign and signs made from different materials can cause a sense of disharmony in the landscape. Information technology and mobile phone apps offer an ever expanding opportunity to inform the visitor and interpret the heritage.

Objectives		Policies	
RO1	The development and management of informal recreation in the AONB should respect the character of the area whilst meeting the needs of visitors for quiet informal recreation.	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.
RO2	Everyone can enjoy and explore the AONB in ways that respect the purposes of designation.	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.
<b>Illustrative actions:</b>			
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.			
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

### Background

- 4.24. Information has a central role to play in enhancing people's enjoyment of the AONB and ensuring that they do not make decisions that inadvertently affect the protected landscape. It is also key to supporting sustainable economic growth through tourism and assisting those who manage land.
- 4.25. The way information is presented in a non-formal way – that is, to visitors rather than in a formal learning environment, such as in a school – is called interpretation. Interpretation is the telling of a story. It is a way of communicating something significant about a place, a thing or a person, so that visitors can appreciate and understand it more and take something new away with them when they leave. Effective interpretation will provoke and connect with audiences, leaving them moved and inspired. It can stimulate their inquisitiveness, feed their imagination and encourage specific behaviour and ways of thinking.
- 4.26. The growth of the internet and other electronic media provide new and exciting ways for presenting information. The use of audio trails, podcasts and social media can

help to reach new and younger audiences. Some people may prefer hard copy, such as the recently published Nature of the Malverns book. All profits from its sale fund wildlife conservation on the hills and commons.<sup>117</sup> Guided walks and events remain a popular way of engaging visitors. The choice of media for presenting information will depend on a number of criteria, including the resources available.

- 4.27. The Malvern Hills have long provided inspiration for artists, writers and musicians, many of whom have made, and continue to make, the area their home. More recently, the area has become a centre of hi-tech innovation with a growing expertise in the field of technology and tourism. There is a story to tell and the means to tell it. The recent Route to the Hills project promotes Malvern's rich historic and cultural offer to people of all ages, with a new walking route linking the town to the hills. The accessibility and variety of the AONB's landscape provides many educational opportunities for schools and young people to learn more about the special qualities of the area.

### **Special features**

- A centre of technical innovation and expertise
- An active tourism and technology group
- Popular Tourist Information/Visitor Centres
- A diverse and growing resource of information

### **Key Issues**

#### **Strategic planning of interpretation (IP1, IP4)**

- 4.28. There are many sources of information about the area. These include leaflets, on-site panels and web pages relating to different parts of the AONB, supplied by many different bodies and individuals. There is relatively little coordination of this provision. There are gaps in the provision with some areas and subjects having no coverage. Declining budgets have led to the closure of information centres and the loss of trained staff. It is not surprising that people only have a partial understanding of the AONB.
- 4.29. There are many ways to deliver information and interpretation. However it is done, it must be of high quality and respectful of the environment. The form must be chosen to meet the needs of the person who receives it. There is a need for the strategic planning of interpretation. This should bring together all who have a story to tell about the area.

#### **Poor awareness of the AONB (IP3)**

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<sup>117</sup> Ian Duncan, Peter Garner and Peter Creed (2018), Nature of the Malverns, an ancient landscape steeped in wildlife, NatureBureau, Newbury - ISBN: 978-1-874357-83-4

- 4.30. Although there is a high awareness of the Malvern Hills, many people in the community are unaware of the AONB and its special qualities, or their impact on its features. There is also a perception that the designation prevents growth and holds back the economy. Community projects, press articles and projects with partners all help to raise the profile of the AONB among residents and visitors. However, there is still a need to raise awareness of its value and its potential for conserving, protecting and enhancing the area.

**Signage clutter (IP5)**

- 4.31. To make the best of the natural environment there is a need for good orientation and information for visitors. They need way marking for walking and cycling routes. People want information and interpretation in appropriate places. They also want a tranquil place, free from clutter. IT Apps can better inform the visitor without degrading the scenery. Poor mobile phone coverage hinders the development of this approach.

**Need for coordinated signage (RP2, TRP3, IP5)**

- 4.32. Good way marking and signage of the rights of way network can serve many valuable purposes. It prevents people from getting lost and ensures that they do not inadvertently stray and interfere with land management practices. However, an excess of signs detracts from the enjoyment of the open countryside. The use of different types of sign and signs made from different materials can cause a sense of disharmony in the landscape.

**Impacts of lifestyle choices (IP1, RP5)**

- 4.33. Individual life style choices can have a profound influence on the character and quality of the AONB. For example, residents of Malvern Hills District emit more carbon dioxide per dwelling than almost any other part of Britain<sup>118</sup>. There is a need to develop a common understanding of the key threats that face the area. These include the implications of climate change and land management practices; and car, energy and resource usage on the character and quality of the AONB. The need is to encourage more sustainable lifestyles in tune with the ambitions of this Management Plan. Energy and resource use should be reduced. People should be encouraged to support activities that help sustain the landscape fabric of the AONB, such as the purchase of local goods and services.

Objectives		Policies	
IO1	That residents and visitors value the special qualities of the AONB and understand the need to invest in their management.	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.

		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.
		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
<b>Illustrative actions:</b>			
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

### Background

- 4.34. There are many opportunities for people to give their time to help look after the AONB and to make it a better place for themselves and others. This includes 'traditional volunteering' and a growing interest in what some people call 'investment volunteering', where people give their time and energy in return for dividends at a later date. Volunteering can provide a way of developing people's interests, personal skills and social networks. It can also develop a sense of belonging and respect. The Localism Act<sup>119</sup> was introduced in November 2011. The intent is to devolve more decision-making powers from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils. One aim is to encourage volunteering. Government wants local social enterprises, volunteers and community groups with a bright idea for improving local services to get a chance to change how things are done<sup>120</sup>.
- 4.35. There are 22 town and parish councils in the AONB. Their elected members give their time freely for their community. Every parish also contains people who care for

<sup>118</sup> Vision 21 - The Malvern Hills Partnership Our Future Together: *A sustainable community strategy for Malvern Hills District 2006 - 2021*, Malvern Hills District Council, (2006)

<sup>119</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted>

<sup>120</sup> A plain English guide to the Localism Bill Department for Communities and Local Government, June 2011

the natural beauty and heritage of the area. Much of this work is unrecognised and unrecorded.

4.36. There are some very good examples of organised volunteering in the AONB. These include:

- The Malvern Hills Trust who run a Conservation Volunteer team to help manage over 1,200 hectares of land. The team comprises 95 registered volunteers who provide approximately 600 people days of work per year. Volunteer effort is given to practical conservation tasks and to warden and site warden duties.
- The Colwall Orchard Group, which runs approximately 60 volunteer tasks and 5 community events each year, to promote, celebrate and restore traditional orchards in the parish of Colwall. The group has over 70 official members. It has helped to manage over 30 traditional orchards, as well as planting a new community orchard.
- The Worcestershire Wardens Partnership, which supports volunteers working in parks and the countryside throughout the county. The Partnership provides training opportunities, work parties and events for volunteers. It also spreads best practice and ensures a consistently high standard of support for volunteers.
- Malvern Community Forest is a small but active volunteer organisation that invites communities, groups and individuals to be involved in creating and managing woodlands, hedgerows, orchards and meadows for the enjoyment and benefit of local residents, wildlife and the wider environment. They develop and pass on the manual skills and crafts associated with these habitats and their products. It has 60 members and runs a small number of projects that generate over 50 people days of work per year.
- There are a growing number of opportunities to volunteer for the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the AONB, for example, through the Parish Paths Warden and Tree Warden schemes or as a Health Walks Leader. Heritage Lottery Funded projects in the area have created opportunities to become an Orchard Champion or a wildlife recorder whilst those who wish to manage the special geology of the area will find a place with the Earth Heritage Trust.

### **Special features**

- A regular programme of Volunteer Conservation days.
- Voluntary warden services
- Parish Path and Tree Warden schemes

- Colwall Orchard Group
- Worcestershire Wardens Partnership
- Active Civic Societies in Malvern and Ledbury
- Active Transition Groups in Malvern and Colwall
- Earth Heritage Trust volunteers
- Opportunities to survey wildlife and support nature

## **Key Issues**

### **Limited volunteer capacity (VP2, RP5)**

- 4.37. People who regularly give their time are very valuable. If they have essential skills, they are more so. Everyone wants to use them. Without supervision and careful planning, there can be an over reliance on a small number of key people.
- 4.38. In addition, volunteer effort can be quite narrowly focussed on certain geographical areas, such as a particular parish or the Malvern Hills Trust land. This can leave parts of the AONB with very little volunteer support, especially those areas with small, widely-spread populations. There is a need to support volunteers and coordinate their use.

### **Lack of volunteer support (VP1, VP3)**

- 4.39. Sometimes people lack the confidence or knowledge needed to get them started as volunteers. Communities need information, support and guidance to enable them to embrace the challenges and opportunities afforded by localism. Good Councils are those that will work closely with voluntary and community groups and express local needs and wishes effectively.

### **Lack of work programming (VP2)**

- 4.40. Volunteers with specialist and local knowledge can play a very important role. They can build up an understanding of the Malvern Hills area and help in monitoring change in their local area. However, time given voluntarily is not always used to best effect. There is a need to develop work programmes with a variety of agencies to provide opportunities for volunteering in the AONB that helps deliver the management plan.

### **Costs of volunteer coordination (VP1)**

- 4.41. Managing and supporting volunteers takes time and money. Finding the resources to do this is likely to become increasingly difficult in the conservation sector as public funding is cut further. Those businesses that benefit from the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage should support the conservation partnerships and volunteers.

### **Diminishing cash support for voluntary initiatives (VP1)**

4.42. Volunteers can achieve great things but in many cases initiatives need a level of cash support to get them moving and sometimes to keep them moving. Such support can be critical in building momentum for a project and in convincing would-be volunteers that a project is worth engaging in. At a time of diminishing public sector funding, the availability of cash to pump-prime volunteer projects is reducing.

<b>Objectives</b>		<b>Policies</b>	
VO1	To support and manage a wide range of volunteers in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.	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.
		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.
<b>Illustrative action:</b>			
Explore the potential to develop and support a coordinated volunteer network for the whole of the AONB and surrounding area.			

## Glossary

### **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)**

AONBs are areas of landscape that are of such outstanding natural beauty that they merit designation under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. Together, they represent 18% of the finest countryside in England and Wales. The designation helps to protect their special character, for example, through enhanced planning regulations.

### **AONB Partnership**

The AONB Partnership is a working partnership between those who live in, work in and manage the land, and those charged with conserving and enhancing these landscapes and their special qualities.

### **Abiotic factors**

All of the non-living things, such as sunlight, materials (e.g. nitrogen or sulphur dioxide), or processes (such as hydrolysis or photosynthesis), which can affect living or non-living constituents of an ecosystem.

### **Agri-environment schemes**

Provided by Natural England, these schemes offer payment to farmers who give an undertaking, or enter into an agreement, to manage their land for biodiversity, landscape, the historic environment, public access or amenity objectives.

### **Biodiversity**

The term given to the variety of life and the natural processes of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur.

### **Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)**

A BAP is a plan, programme, or strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. A BAP is a key means by which the UK Government commitment to the Convention on Biological diversity at Rio de Janeiro (1992) is to be met. BAPs are being replaced by more spatially focused plans, in line with Biodiversity 2020.

### **Biodiversity 2020**

Published by Defra in 2011, Biodiversity 2020 outlines the strategic direction for biodiversity policy for the next decade on land (including rivers and lakes) and at sea.

### **Category V Protected Landscape**

Defined by the IUCN as an area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity.

### **Climate change**

Change in global climate patterns apparent from the mid- to late 20th century onwards, attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels.

### **Common Agricultural Policy**

European Union system that sets prices, limits of what can be grown and agricultural

subsidies.

### **Common land**

Areas where people who do not own the land have rights to use it for livestock grazing or other purposes. See also registered common land.

### **Community**

A group of interacting people living in a common location.

### **Community Strategy**

The Local Government Act 2000 places a duty on local authorities to prepare a community strategy in partnership with the community to improve the local quality of life and promote well-being. A Community strategy links the work of key stakeholders in a local authority area across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. A Local Strategic Partnership (see below) usually prepares them.

### **Conservation Area**

Designated by the local planning authority as an area which they consider has special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which they consider is desirable to preserve or enhance.

### **Ecosystem**

Natural unit consisting of all plants, animals and micro-organisms (biotic factors) in an area functioning together with all of the non-living physical (abiotic) factors of the environment.

### **Ecosystem services**

Ecosystem services (sometimes called environmental services) are the essential services and benefits that are derived from a fully functioning natural environment, including the management of basic resources such as water, and the sequestration of carbon.

### **Environmental capital**

Environmental capital is the environmental assets, such as soils, from which beneficial services flow supplying resources to the economy. Four basic categories of environmental capital are generally recognised: air, water (fresh, groundwater and marine), land (including soil, space and landscape) and habitats (including the ecosystems, flora and fauna which they both comprise and support).

### **Environmental services**

See ecosystem services.

### **European Landscape Convention (ELC)**

The ELC promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. Its emphasis is on local distinctiveness and relevance to people within the landscape. It is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with all dimensions of European landscape.

### **Geodiversity**

The term geodiversity incorporates the variety of rocks, minerals and landforms, and the processes that have formed them through geological time. The breadth of geodiversity gives insight to past climates, earlier environments and life on earth.

### **Geodiversity Action Plans (GAPs)**

GAPs are similar to Biodiversity Action Plans, but are concerned with the protection of geological diversity. The GAP defines long-term objectives and short-term targets and identifies human and financial resources necessary to achieve these. A GAP builds on an

audit and/or inventory to determine management requirements for the different geodiversity elements.

### **Geopark**

Geoparks are areas of outstanding geological importance identified to promote their heritage for the benefit of local people. Although their interest is primarily geological they are usually also of important archaeological, ecological, cultural and aesthetic interest.

### **(European) Geopark Network**

A network of European Geoparks (established in 2000), with which any geopark must work in order to be formally recognised as such. The Network owns the “European Geopark” trademark. The members of the European Geoparks Network are members of the Global Geoparks Network assisted by UNESCO. (The Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark is currently not recognised as a European Geopark).

### **Green infrastructure**

Strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high-quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality-of-life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability.

### **Heritage Asset**

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

### **Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)**

An HLC documents the ways in which the present countryside reflects how people have exploited, changed and adapted to their physical environment through time, with respect to different social, economic, technological and cultural aspects of life.

### **Invasive species**

Plants, animals and microbes not native to a region which, when introduced either accidentally or intentionally, are harmful to the environment by out-competing native species for available resources, reproducing prolifically or dominating regions and ecosystems.

### **Joint Advisory Committee**

This is a formally constituted body made up of representatives from a wide range of public, private and voluntary groups. Its main roles are to coordinate management of the AONB and implementation of the AONB management plan.

### **Landscape**

An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

### **Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)**

The LCA is a method for identifying, understanding and expressing the different patterns and elements of the landscape. These elements include the woodlands, hedgerows, building styles and historic artefacts that give a place a distinctive character.

### **Listed building**

Listed buildings are structures considered to be of high architectural or historic interest that

are placed on a statutory list to help protect their important features. The list is compiled by the secretary of state for Culture, Media and sport on advice from Historic England.

### **List of locally important features**

Each local authority produces an informal list of locally important features, recommended by the draft Heritage Protection Bill. These represent assets of local special interest as defined by councils.

### **Local Area Agreements (LAAs)**

LAAs set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government, the local authorities, a Local strategic Partnership (see below) and other key partners in the area. LAAs simplify some central funding, help join up public services more effectively and allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances.

### **Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)**

Since 2004, LDFs are part of the new two-tier structure of the planning system (the higher tier is the regional spatial strategy – see below). The LDF replaces the structure Plan and the Local Plan. It consists of a number of Local Development Documents (LDDs) including a Core strategy, site-specific Allocations of Land, and a Proposals Map. It may also contain additional optional development documents such as Area Action Plans. Production of the LDF must be accompanied by a statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

### **Local Enterprise Partnerships**

Partnerships led by local authorities and businesses across natural economic areas. They aim to provide the vision, knowledge and strategic leadership needed to drive sustainable private sector growth and job creation in their area.

### **Local Geological Sites**

Previously known as Regionally Important Geological Sites, sites that are selected by voluntary geo-conservation groups, according to nationally agreed criteria.

### **Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs)**

LNPs are partnerships of a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people who aim to help bring about improvements in their local natural environment. They work strategically to help their local area manage the natural environment.

### **Local Sites**

Local Sites are non-statutory areas of local importance for conservation that complement nationally and internationally designated geological and wildlife sites.

### **Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)**

LSPs are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships that match local authority boundaries. They are a crucial part of the participation process in local development planning and implementation, bringing together public, private, community and voluntary sectors. They help to deliver joint working at the local level to improve public services and meet the needs of local communities.

### **Local Transport Plans (LTPs)**

LTPs are documents produced by local authorities that set out local transport strategies and policies and an implementation programme.

### **Local Wildlife Sites**

There are a number of different terms in use to describe Local Wildlife Sites, including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Sites of Nature Conservation Importance

and County Wildlife Sites. National advice is to use the term, Local Wildlife Sites. Local Wildlife Sites are usually selected within a local authority area through Local Nature Partnerships. They support both locally and nationally threatened wildlife, and many sites will contain English priority habitats and species.

### **National Heritage List**

The National Heritage List for England is the only official and up to date database of all nationally designated heritage assets including: Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, World Heritage Sites, applications for Certificates of Immunity, current Building Preservation Notices.

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

### **Natural Capital**

Those elements of the natural environment that provide valuable goods and services to people, such as the stock of forests, water, land, minerals and oceans.

### **Natural Character Areas (NCAs)**

Areas defined at the national level, which describe the geographical, ecological and historical variations in landscape character that make one area different from another. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

### **Natural Character Area (NCA) profiles**

Total of 159 distinct profiles produced by Natural England to make environmental evidence and information easily available to a wider audience.

### **Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs)**

NIAs operate over large areas within which significant enhancements of ecological networks are achieved, by enhancing existing wildlife sites, improving ecological connections and restoring ecological processes. A consortium of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and voluntary conservation organisations, supported by national agencies, manages them. Following a national competition, England's first NIAs started work on the 1 April 2012. Government can designate additional NIAs on the recommendation of Local Nature Partnerships.

### **Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)**

Parish and town councils and neighbourhood forums can write a NDP for their area. Subject to conforming to national policies, as well as local plan policies for the area, and gaining support through a referendum of the local area, this plan will be adopted as a formal part of the local development plan.

### **Precambrian**

Period of geological time, dating from the consolidation of the Earth's crust around 4,600 million years ago to about 545 million years ago.

### **Protected landscape area**

Defined by the IUCN as a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

### **Regional Forestry Framework (RFF)**

The regional Forestry Framework is a strategy produced by the Forestry Commission which describes the forestry resource of a region and presents a vision and a set of objectives for the future of forestry in that area. The frameworks are set within a broader strategy, 'A strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests', which was produced by Defra in June 2007.

### **Renewable energy**

Natural energy that can be used again and again and will not run out. Sources of renewable energy include wind, water and solar power.

### **Scheduled Monument**

A Scheduled Monument is defined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the National Heritage Act 1983 as a protected archaeological site or historic building of national importance. Nationally, they range from prehistoric standing stones and burial mounds to more recent structures such as collieries and wartime pill-boxes. The scheduling of a monument means that permission is required for works affecting that monument.

### **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)**

SSSIs are the best examples of our natural heritage of wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms. An SSSI is an area that has been notified as being of special interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

### **Social capital**

Social capital describes the pattern and intensity of networks among people and the shared values that arise from those networks. While definitions of social capital vary, the main aspects are citizenship, neighbourliness, trust and shared values, community involvement, volunteering, social networks and civic participation.

### **Special Features**

The physical elements of the landscape and any specific attributes that help define the special qualities

### **Special Qualities**

Those aspects of the area's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, that make the area distinctive and are valuable, particularly at a national scale.

### **Stakeholder**

Anyone affected by or who can affect the outcome of a decision.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

SEA is a European directive that requires authorities to prepare a formal assessment of environment impact for certain plans and programmes that are likely to have an effect on the environment. AONB management plans are subject to SEA.

### **Sustainable development**

Sustainable development means meeting four objectives at the same time: social progress that meets the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; and maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

### **Sustainable communities**

Places where people want to live and work, now and in the future, that meet the diverse

needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life.

**Sustainable tourism**

Sustainable tourism is tourism that attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment and the conservation of local ecosystem services. It is responsible tourism that is both ecologically and culturally sensitive.

**Topography**

Set of physical features such as mountains, valleys and the shapes of landforms that characterise a given landscape.

**Viewshed**

An area of land, water or other environmental element that is visible to the human eye from a fixed vantage point.

**Village Design Statements (VDSs)**

VDSs are produced by communities to identify local character and set out design guidance to help guide new development.

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