

**MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**5 APRIL 2019****INFORMATION ITEMS**

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**Management Plan ref.  
(abridged)****LP2 Restore distinctive  
landscapes and  
landscape features that  
have been significantly  
degraded****BP5 Undertake survey  
and research to provide  
decision-makers with  
accurate and  
appropriate data.****BP3 – Enhance the  
wildlife value of the  
countryside and  
achieve greater  
connectivity between  
key habitats within the  
AONB and between the  
AONB and the  
countryside beyond****FP1 – Encourage the  
take-up of grant options  
and management  
practices that benefit****Project**New trees

10 new 'standard' trees (Oaks and Perry Pears) have been planted in hedgerows at Eight Oaks Farm near Castlemorton Common. The AONB Unit is exploring whether funding can be obtained to plant further new trees in suitable hedgerows in the AONB.

The Unit assisted Malvern Wells Parish Council with the acquisition of 3 Worcester Black Pear trees that have been planted on the edge of the village green in the parish

Finding Rare Species in the Malverns

This project involves working with volunteers and landowners in the north of the AONB to help collect data on some of our rarest and most iconic species. A programme of training and survey events is now being finalised for the 2019 survey season. This will be the second and final year of the project and all attempts are being made to maximise the survey work that takes place in the AONB.

Highways Verges Management Pilot Project.

An invitation to tender for this pilot project was issued in the summer of 2018 but met with no responses. A subsequent invitation was issued over the winter of 2018/19 but this was met with just one response, which was unacceptable. Consequently, the project is being refocussed onto more intensive management of a small number of verge areas. It is hoped that this will progress in the Autumn of 2019, again with the intention of making use of Natural Networks programme funding (a grants project funded by the European Structural Investment Fund and managed by Worcestershire County Council).

Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund

The AONB Unit successfully bid to the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund for an area of land west of the Malvern Hills. The Facilitation Fund is a government

**the distinctive natural and historic environment of the AONB**

supported fund to help people and organisations that bring farmers, foresters, and other land managers together to improve the natural environment at a landscape scale. The Malvern Hills group has now had its inaugural event which covered the subject of tree disease and plant health, with presentations made by experts in both the public and private sectors. In February an event on Managing Boar and Deer was held at Eastnor. 25 land owners and managers attended this event

#### Hope End Park

This is on Historic England's Heritage Assets Register. There are 6 owners of it. Attempts are being made by Historic England and the AONB Unit to get a consensus to produce a plan for the park to conserve its 'Gardenesque' style

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

#### Malvern Hills AONB Environs Study

The AONB Unit is working alongside the South Worcestershire Planning Authorities on a Malvern Hills AONB Environs study. This involves an assessment of the sensitivity and capacity of different areas of land around Malvern and further afield to different forms of development. The report will form part of the evidence base for the south Worcestershire authorities in considering the next development plan and future housing allocations. It should also be useful in helping us to better understand what constitutes the setting of the AONB in this area. A final report is expected to be available in the summer.

#### Colwall views study

Following on from work carried out for Malvern Town Council, a study to identify key viewpoints from and across Colwall has been completed. This has helped to generate an evidence base which now underpins a key policy in the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan and should help to secure these key views for the future.

#### New guidance documents

The AONB Unit has recently closed a period of public consultation on two new guidance documents: 'Guidance on respecting landscape in views' and 'Good practice guide for outdoor lighting.' It is hoped that both documents will be published in the Spring.

**That people understand and celebrate the area and its designation as an AONB.**

2019 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the designation of the Malvern Hills AONB, and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act which brought AONBs into being. The AONB Unit would appreciate offers and suggestions for how these important anniversaries could be used to help raise awareness and understanding. **It is particularly keen to hear about partner activities which could be used to help meet this aim.**

**RO1 The development and management of recreation in the AONB should respect the character of the area whilst meeting the needs of visitors for quiet informal recreation**

#### Visitor Survey

The final report from a small visitor survey that took place on the Malvern hills and commons is available at:

<https://bit.ly/2VZWszm>

The results are worth a look, being valuable in informing the work of both the Malvern Hills Trust and the AONB Partnership.

For example:

- 60% of respondents were aware that the hills are managed by the Malvern Hills Trust (Conservators) whilst only 15% mentioned the AONB when asked if they were aware of any particular designations or terms that apply to the area.
- 98% of respondents rated the management of the area as good or very good.
- 99% of respondents said that levels of enjoyment of their visit were either high or very high.
- The 'beautiful/pretty/great views' was the most popular response when people were asked what they particularly liked about the area (mentioned by 48% of respondents).

The visitor survey did not count numbers of users of the Malvern Hills and Commons but there are moves afoot to estimate a total.

## **Recommendation**

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

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

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