

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

Management Plan ref. (abridged)	Project
<p><b>LP3 Promote positive change to landowners, managers, developers etc.</b></p>	<p><u>Land management advice</u> The Unit commissioned call-off advice from a land management advisor towards the end of 2019/20 and again in 2020/21. This has helped us to step-up our conservation advisory work with owners and farmers with 10 advisory visits taking place in 2019/20 and a similar number expected this year.</p>
<p><b>BP2 Conserve, enhance and expand key habitats and populations of key species in line with local biodiversity priorities</b></p>	<p><u>Skylarks in the AONB</u> The AONB Unit worked with a farmer in the east of the AONB in the winter of 2019/20 with a view to creating skylark plots – small crop-free areas in winter sown cereal fields – to give these ground nesting birds a better chance of breeding successfully the following spring/summer. Unfortunately the very damp winter meant that it was too wet to take machinery onto the fields to spray off the plots, providing an example of how extremes of weather can have a direct effect on conservation activity. If the farmer is willing we will try again this winter.</p>
<p><b>BP4 Improve knowledge and understanding of the AONB’s biodiversity...</b></p>	<p><u>Botanical survey of grasslands</u> In July 2020 a highly qualified botanist carried out a rapid walk over survey of grasslands across 7 land holdings in the AONB. The survey identified areas which are species-rich and of most interest for nature conservation and areas of relatively low conservation value. The results have been shared with landowners and provide a basis for discussions about future management within land holdings, for example, identifying areas which could usefully be kept free from grazing in the early summer to benefit nectar-feeding insects. The survey results have also led to conversations with 2 owners about restoring species-richness to meadows.</p>
<p><b>BP1 – Enhance the wildlife value of the countryside and achieve greater connectivity between key habitats within the AONB and between the AONB and the countryside beyond</b></p>	<p><u>Highways Verges Management Pilot Project.</u> This two-year pilot project (part-funded by the Natural Networks programme - a grants project funded by the European Structural Investment Fund and managed by Worcestershire County Council) is now complete. Three grassland areas in the east of the AONB have been enhanced: part of the recreational playing field in Malvern Wells, a highway verge in Castlemorton parish and a highway verge underneath Little Malvern Priory (Little Malvern and Welland parish). Works have included stripping</p>

**HP1 – Conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment**

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

**Hope End Park**

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

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

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

**Countryside Stewardship**

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

**FP7: Promote local and seasonal produce and support the****Marketing Meat from the Hills**

With the quality of meat from livestock reared on the Hills being so high, and increasing worries about the source of food, the AONB Unit has teamed up with graziers and a local

**development of local services and markets**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Malvern Stone Bank

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

Colwall Footpaths

Exploring what's on your doorstep is the 'new local tourism' and seemingly, the great balm for mind and body. Working with Colwall Parish Council, the AONB Unit is helping to reprint their popular footpaths map and create a couple of phone 'apps' as a guide to the best walks.

Worcester to Malvern Active Travel Corridor

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

New guidance documents

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

Images of the AONB

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

**Recommendation**

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

**Contact Points****County Council Contact Points**

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