

MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

28 APRIL 2023

AONB BUDGET AND WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

Recommendation

1. The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the budget for 2023/24; and**
- b) Comment on the overall direction and work priorities for the year ahead.**

Summary

2. A summary of the draft 'core' budget for the year is provided in Appendix 1. Budget figures from the previous year are provided in brackets for comparison. The main points to note are as follows.

Budget

3. The total core budget (not including voluntary contributions from Parish Councils) for 2023/24 is £215,594, this is unchanged from 2022/23. This reflects an increased grant settlement from Defra to AONB Partnerships covering the period 2022-2025.
4. Central government (Defra) is providing a total of £173,490 (£173,490). Local authorities in the area are providing £42,104 (£42,104) of match funding to core costs in the following proportions:

Herefordshire Council - £16,334
Worcestershire County Council - £13,268
Malvern Hills District Council - £11,000
Forest of Dean District Council - £872
Gloucestershire County Council - £630

Voluntary contributions

6. At its meeting on 26/04/13, JAC members agreed that there was merit in inviting Parish and Town Councils to make voluntary contributions to the work of the AONB Partnership. An initial request was made to a small number of Councils and, following some success, additional Councils were contacted. Appendix 2 summarises contributions received since 2017/18. Whilst some individual contributions may be small they can add up to very decent totals which are useful when added to the overall budget for delivering the Partnership's work programme. Financial contributions can be seen as a tangible expression of how local councils value the work of the AONB Partnership.

Staff

7. A part time Planning Officer commenced work on 1 February 2023. David Armitage and Karen Humphries share the post of Partnership Assistant Manager working for a combined 6 days a week. The Partnership Support Officer post has been vacant since 2020 but help with financial transactions etc is provided by the Worcestershire County Council Greenspace team.

Work priorities

8. The Unit's work programme for 2023/24 will be centred around the implementation of the AONB Management Plan but is also expected to be driven, significantly, by more recent drivers and initiatives. Key priorities for the year are expected to include:

- Implementing the Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB and participating in partner initiatives to progress nature recovery (e.g. Biodiversity Net Gain, development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies).
- More work on helping people to make an emotional connection with the AONB, perhaps through the development of a local or national (in partnership with others) arts project.
- Understanding populations in and around the AONB and work to increase participation amongst different audiences (including preparing for a second year of delivering Defra's Capital Access Grants in 24/25).
- Advice and support to landowners via the landowners group (NB Charlotte Vincent who has previously supported us in this role is no longer doing so). This might include a focus on catchment and water management.
- Delivering Defra's Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.
- More work on planning. This could include revising the AONB Building Design Guide and renewables guidance and finalising new Position Statements. NB It is not known at this time whether the Planning Officer would have the time to undertake any of this work in-house. Work on strategic planning linked to reviews of the South Worcestershire Development Plan and Herefordshire Local Plan will also be a feature of planning work for the year.
- Compiling a State of the AONB report in line with new guidance from Natural England and new (anticipated) place-based targets.
- More work on helping partners to meet carbon zero targets and potentially producing a Climate Change Action Plan to put this work on a surer footing.

Project funding

9. See paper on the agenda for information about funding to the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Specific Contact Points for this report

Paul Esrich, AONB Partnership Manager

Tel: 01905 845057

Email: PEsrich@worcestershire.gov.uk

Appendix 1 –Indicative budget for Malvern Hills AONB Partnership in 2023/24

Element	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Staff (costs inc. salary, NI, super, training, travel, NI, backfunding pensions etc)								
AONB Manager	£65,495	£63,495	£58,941	£58,941	£57,399	£52,160	£52,410	£52,405
AONB Assistant Manager	£58,105	£64,225	£54,000	£44,518	£43,500	£39,510	£39,600	£39,500
AONB Support Officer/Team Support (WCC)	£5,000	£5,229	£0	£18,949	£18,202	£15,650	£15,770	£15,770
AONB Planning Officer	£25,000	£4,537						
Strategy Officer/Planning Advice			£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000	£7,000	£8,000
Landowner support		£3,965						
Sub total	153,600	£141,452	£121,941	£130,408	£127,101	£115,320	£114,780	£115,675
Accommodation/ office equipment	£10,000	£10,851	£9,072	£9,072	£9,072	£9,072	£8,742	£8,742
Partnership budget for PR, events etc.								
NAAONB membership	£2,700	£2,789	£3,000	£3,000	£2,575	£2,575	£2,400	£2,400
Annual review	£400	£340	£400	£400	£358	£400	£400	£400
Small grants scheme for landscape and biodiversity improvements	£5,000	£8,790	£10,000	£10,000	£4,000	£3,000	£3,600	£3,600
Landscape scale project development	£3,000	£2,840	£4,580	£4,580	£4,580	£3,000	£3,500	£3,500
External advice	£5,327	£15,722	£7,967	£3,500	£3,500	£1,500		
State of AONB report	£10,000					£5,000		
Management Plan review						£9,000		
Large projects	£5,000	£7,304	£8,000	£10,000	£5,000	£5,000	£6,980	£4,380
Communications	£2,000	£9,632	£7,000	£5,000	£3,000	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
Sub total	£33,427	£47,417	£40,947	£32,480	£23,013	£31,475	£24,880	£22,280
Partnership running costs (Council support, IT, personnel, finance etc.)	£9,237	£9,327	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237	£9,237

Sustainable Development Fund	£9,300	£10,869	£12,190	£12,190	£22,875	£22,872	£25,991	£25,502
Total Budget	£215,594 1	£219,826	£193,387	£193,387	£191,298	£187,976	£183,875	£181,436

Appendix 2 – Voluntary contributions from Parish/Town Councils

Organisation	Contribution				
	2022/23	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Colwall PC	£2,500	£1,500	£1,500	£750	£750
Cradley PC	£100		£100	£100	£100
Ledbury TC			£500	£500	
Malvern Wells PC	£1,000	£1,000	£760	£1,600	£1,600
Little Malvern & Welland PC	£300	£300	£300	£250	£250
West Malvern PC	£300	£300	£300	£300	£300
Wellington Heath PC	£125	£100	£100		
Berrow PC				£50	
Total	£4,325	£3,200	£3,560	£3,550	£3,000

¹ Not including additional voluntary contributions