

Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Management Plan 2014-2019





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Lord de Mauley

Ministerial foreword

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our finest landscapes. They are cherished by residents and visitors alike and allow millions of people from all walks of life to understand and connect with nature.

I am pleased to see that this management plan demonstrates how AONB Partnerships can continue to protect these precious environments despite the significant challenges they face. With a changing climate, the increasing demands of a growing population and in difficult economic times, I believe AONBs represent just the sort of community driven, collaborative approach needed to ensure our natural environment is maintained for generations to come.

AONB Partnerships have been the architects of a landscape-scale approach to land management. This approach is a key feature of the Government's Natural Environment White Paper and emphasises the need to manage ecosystems in an integrated fashion, linking goals on wildlife, water, soil and landscape, and working at a scale that respects natural systems.

This management plan also makes the important connection between people and nature. I am pleased to hear that local communities have been central to the development of the plan, and will be at the heart of its delivery. From volunteers on nature conservation projects, to businesses working to promote sustainable tourism, it's great to hear of the enthusiasm and commitment of the local people who hold their AONBs so dear.

AONBs are, and will continue to be, landscapes of change. Management plans such as this are vital in ensuring these changes are for the better. I would like to thank all those who were involved in bringing this plan together and I wish you every success in bringing it to fruition.

Lord de Mauley

Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rupert de Mauley". The signature is written in a cursive style.



British Camp

Chairman's foreword

We are fortunate to live in the vicinity of one of this country's designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and our stewardship of the Malvern Hills AONB is an important responsibility for us all.

We are required in law to have a management plan for the area and this new plan looks towards the year 2020. It seeks both to conserve and enhance what we value most as well as setting new directions for our work in relation to natural resources, landscape, biodiversity, and support for sustainable economic development within the area. The plan itself is the outcome of much careful reflection on the state of our AONB, of fresh data-gathering and of widespread consultation. I hope, therefore, that it speaks for us all.

Our 'State of the AONB report' – the companion document to this management plan - catalogues the considerable progress that has been made on a number of fronts over the past five years. This is the consequence of much care and hard work by the many individuals and organisations with a stake in the area – from owners of listed buildings to our government agencies. But of course there is much more work to be done and many existing and new challenges to be confronted. At a time when finances available to us continue to shrink we have to be both very clear about our priorities and strongly committed to working together and pooling our resources to ensure maximum impact.

The launch of a new management plan is an appropriate moment to say thank you both to those who have worked so hard over the past plan period and for all the thoughtful contributions that are reflected in this new one. I hope that we are all suitably inspired by it to do what we can, both individually and together, so helping to realise its ambitions and to progress our important mission of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Malvern Hills AONB.



Councillor John Raine

John Raine

Chairman of the Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

As members of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) we commend and endorse this management plan*

Chairman John Raine

Malvern Hills District Council

Vice Chairman

Phill Bettington

Herefordshire Council

Chris Cheeseman

Malvern Hills District Council

Anthony Johnson

Herefordshire Council

Ken Pollock

Worcestershire County Council

Paul Tuthill

Worcestershire County Council

Roger Yeates

Forest of Dean District Council

Nicky Carless

Herefordshire Association of Local Councils

Jerry Fryman

Worcestershire Association of Local Councils

Sarah Faulkner

National Farmers Union

James Hervey-Bathurst

Country Land and Business Association

Frank Hill

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England

Dawn Griffiths

Natural England

Ian George

English Heritage

Arthur Lee

Herefordshire Local Access Forum

Richard Bryant

Herefordshire & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust

Mike Ashton

Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce

Wayne Barnes

Forestry Commission

Gwyneth Rees

Malvern Hills Conservators

*Names of JAC members are followed by the organisations they represent

Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of economic and social development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

A summary of the special qualities of the Malvern Hills AONB

- The Malvern Hills: a high, dramatic ridge that is visible from the Severn Vale and from the rolling hills and valleys to the west.
- 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.
- A wide variety of wildlife habitats and species, many of which are nationally rare.
- A large number of sites that have been designated for their special characteristics. These include 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), one Local Nature Reserve and many other special and key geological and wildlife sites.
- 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.
- 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

In 2012, Defra and Natural England advised those carrying out management plan reviews that there is a greater imperative to consider the effect of development in the setting of protected landscapes. The setting of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is the surroundings in which the area is experienced. If the quality of the setting declines, then the appreciation and enjoyment of the AONB diminishes. Construction of a distant but high structure; development or change generating movement, noise, odour, artificial light, vibration or dust over a wide area; or a new understanding of the relationship between neighbouring landscapes may all impact on/extend the setting¹.

The purpose of AONB designation

The primary purpose of AONB designation is 'to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area'².

'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.'³

What is natural beauty?

The term 'natural beauty' is enshrined in the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. Over the years qualification and amendment to the legislation has made it clear that natural beauty includes considerations such as wildlife, geological features and cultural heritage⁴. 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 centuries⁵. 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 landscape⁶.



Cattle, North Hill

1. Adapted from: 'The Setting of Heritage Assets', English Heritage 2011 (revised 2012).

2. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 82.

3. Countryside Commission Policy Statement on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 1991.

4. Countryside Council for Wales: *A draft statement on natural beauty*, report by The University of Sheffield, January 2006.

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

6. Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006: Section 99.



Enjoying the Malvern Hills AONB

What is an AONB management plan?

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.

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?

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 policy⁷. All public bodies have a statutory duty to 'have regard' to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of an AONB⁸.

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.

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.

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 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 review the action plan, which sets out the programme for achieving the Management Plan's aims and objectives, annually.

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

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

7. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 89.

8. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: Section 85.

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

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.

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, it is also expected that this management plan will influence the preparation and delivery of key policies, plans and processes affecting the area. This would cover, for example, Local Plans, Neighbourhood Development Plans, Local Transport Plans and Green Infrastructure Strategies.

The Malvern Hills Conservators are a major partner in the AONB partnership. Established in 1884 under the Malvern Hills Act, the Conservators are one of the oldest conservation bodies in the UK. The Malvern Hills Acts were set up to protect the rights of commoners and the public and to prevent encroachment on the Malvern Hills, lands and commons. The role of the Conservators is separate from, but complementary to, that of the AONB Partnership. The Conservators control 11% of the land in the AONB. They publish a management plan for their land. This is a significant document for the AONB and its management.

Which common issues run throughout the management plan?

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

Sustainability

Sustainability is about making sure that our actions today do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. 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.

Rural land use and activities, and development

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 recent years, particularly in farming. These practices will continue to shape the integrity and quality of the character of the AONB landscape, and its ability to support biodiversity.

Agricultural change can lead to a decline in the quality of the landscape but it can also enhance the character of an area. Current grant schemes encourage farmers to retain and enhance landscape character. This is easier to achieve with support from residents, visitors and relevant organisations.

This management plan takes account of the views of local people, as well as a range of public, private and voluntary sector bodies.

Partners need to think carefully about how they might use their own resources to achieve the management plan's objectives.

Benefits from the natural and cultural environment

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-being⁹. The AONB Partnership recognises the importance of these 'environmental services'. They should be used and managed within boundaries that allow the resource to renew itself. 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.

There is a need to consider the value of these environmental services when taking actions that affect the AONB. This must include the future costs arising from any increase in environmental risks. Table 1 lists the principal components of the environmental services provided by the area.

Table 1: Components of the AONB's environmental services¹⁰

Provisioning services	Cultural services	Regulating services
<i>The products obtained from nature</i>	<i>The non-material benefits people obtain from nature</i>	<i>The benefits obtained from the regulation of natural processes</i>
Food provision	Sense of place/inspiration	Regulating soil erosion
Timber provision	Sense of history	Regulating soil quality
Biomass energy	Tranquillity	Regulating water quality
Genetic diversity	Recreation	Pollination
	Biodiversity	
	Geodiversity	

Climate change

Because of increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, global warming is now a serious consideration for all policy makers. Although the long-term effects of climate change are not clear, the likely results are changing weather patterns and rising average temperatures. Long-term changes could radically alter the natural environment of the AONB. Management of the AONB must 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.

9. Defra and Natural England advice note to AONB Partnerships 2012.

10. After National Character Area Profile 103: Malvern Hills, published by Natural England.

Lack of resources

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.

How is the management plan structured?

The management plan is presented in three main sections, which cover:

- the natural and cultural environment,
- community life, and
- enjoying and understanding.

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 and features of the landscape and any specific attributes;
- key issues – the issues and threats to these special features;
- aim – the difference the AONB Partnership wants to make for the AONB;
- objectives – the specific things needed in order to make progress towards the aim;
- policies – how the objectives will be achieved.

Each objective and policy is given a reference number. The numbers are used within the text to illustrate links between key issues and specific objectives and policies.

Two further documents are important in relation to the management plan.

- An annual action plan that outlines the work needed to achieve the strategic objectives outlined here.
- A 'State of the Malvern Hills AONB report' that records the condition of the AONB's special features in 2013/2014. This document provides a baseline from which the success of the management plan is measured.

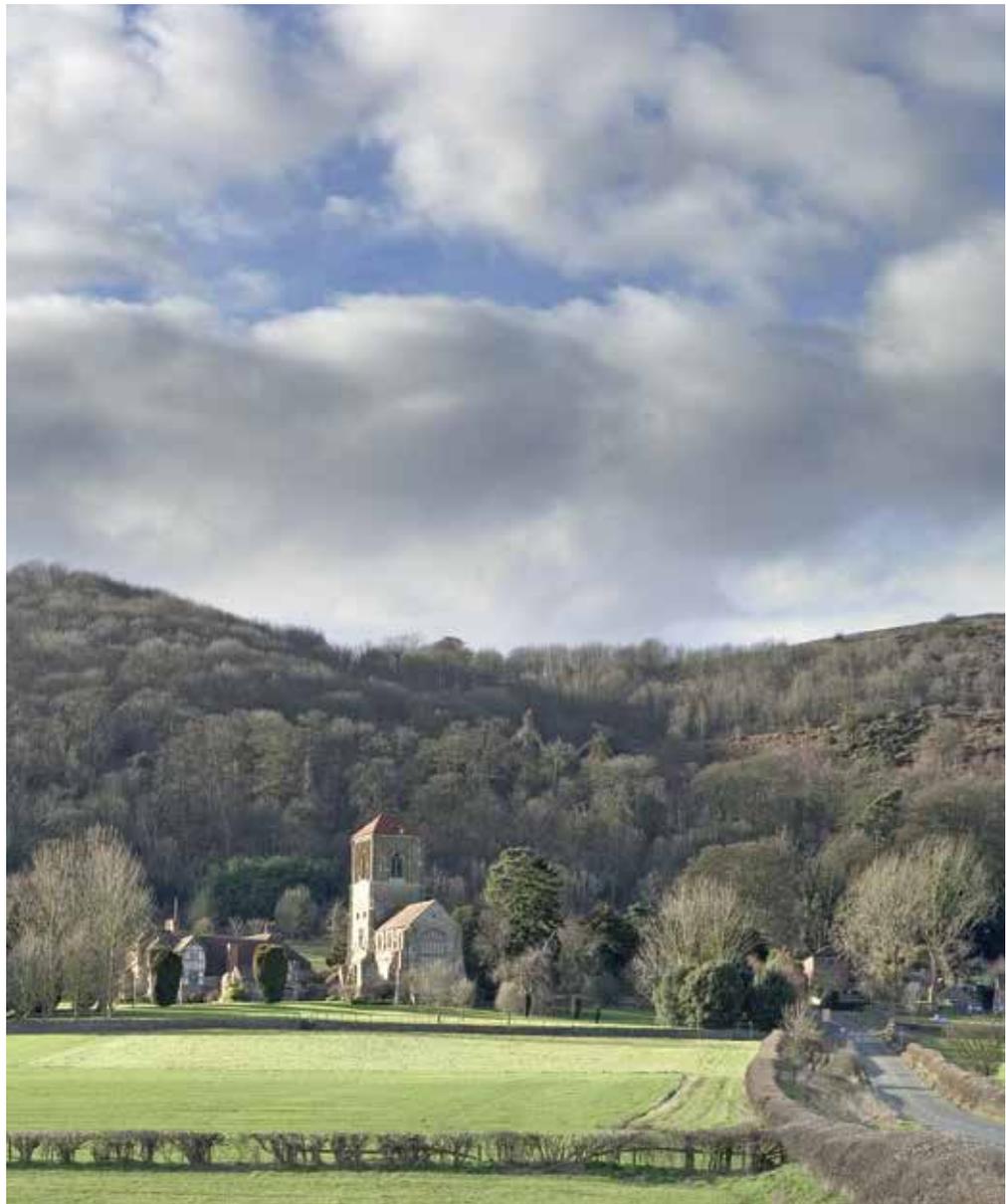


Tractors, Bromsberrow

The Partnership wishes to enhance the benefits the AONB provides for society.

The State of the AONB in 2013/14

Table 2 provides a summary of the condition of the Malvern Hills AONB in 2013/14. 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 2014. http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/condition_monitoring.html



Little Malvern Priory

Table 2: Summary of the condition of the Malvern Hills AONB IN 2013/14

Special qualities of the Malvern Hills AONB	Headline indicator (2013)	Equivalent results for 2008 (where available)	Condition trend	Level for comparison (national where available)
Farmed landscape (including the Malvern Hills)	82.0% of the agricultural area is actively managed under the Environmental Stewardship scheme	51.0%	Improving	The average for all AONBS is 74.0% The figure for England is 70.0%
Woodlands	53.0% of woodland is 'actively' managed	No data	Unknown	The average for all AONBs is also 53.0%
Biodiversity	99.7% of the area of all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering' condition.	89.0%	Improving	The average for all AONBs is 96.6% The average for England is 96.1%
Biodiversity	84.4% of water courses by length are of moderate water quality. 15.6% are of poor water quality. 66.7% of groundwater bodies are of good water quality. 33.3% are of poor water quality.	No data	Unknown	The average for all AONBs is 54.0% The average for all AONBs is 17.5% The average for all AONBs is 62.0% The average for all AONBs is 38.0%
Geodiversity	100% of earth heritage Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are in favourable condition	86.9%	Improved to maximum level	The average for earth heritage SSSIs being in favourable condition in all AONBs is 85.0%
	61.5% of Local Geological Sites are in desirable condition	75.6%	Declining	
Built heritage	100% of Scheduled Monuments in satisfactory condition	63.0%	Improved to maximum level	
	91.9% of listed buildings are in good or fair condition	91.8%	Stable	
Tranquillity	49.1% of AONB is of high or very high tranquillity	All data are from 2006	Unknown	No comparable figures are possible
	13.3% of AONB is of low or very low tranquillity			
Enjoyment	77.4% of public rights of way network is easy to use	73.2%	Improving	Generally 10% higher than level recorded in neighbouring counties

Section

2

The natural and cultural environment



Eastnor Castle

Introduction

The AONB is of international importance, recognised as a 'Category V Protected Landscape' by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)¹¹. 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".

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.

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. 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.

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.

11. 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>

The historic environment of the AONB is an essential part of its uniqueness. It is the legacy of centuries of human activity and culture in complex layers, and the rich and diverse historical record, that contributes significantly to the area's landscape, sense of place and identity.

Farming, forestry and hunting 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.

These components of the AONB – the landscape, geodiversity, 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.

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.

The following chapters consider these resources and their management under separate themes:

- landscape,
- geodiversity,
- biodiversity,
- historic environment, and
- farming and forestry.

It is commonly recognised that land management and the solutions to problems on the ground must be integrated. The European Landscape Convention¹² 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 environmental services. Landscapes have undergone, often dramatic, change in the past. Yet they continue to provide a wide range of environmental services.



Hikers, Pinnacle Hill

For such a small area, the AONB has a notable geodiversity resource including classic geological formations and sites.

12. 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>



Timber stack, Ballards Wood



Mathon Church through the trees

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 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.

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 benefits and a flourishing biodiversity.
- Native hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide a widespread network of 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 up with wildlife-friendly countryside, both within and outside the AONB.

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.



Thatched cottage, Eastnor

Farming and forestry

- There is a profitable and buoyant farm economy.
- High-quality local produce such as cider and lamb helps to sustain small-scale mixed farm traditions.
- The woodland estate yields a constant supply of timber products that supports the local economy.
- Farmers, foresters and other land managers are actively engaged in conserving and restoring the area's special qualities.



High Wood, near Eastnor



Towards Worcestershire Beacon

Landscape

Background

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.

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.

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.

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.

Change in the landscape is inevitable, whether because of development or natural causes, such as Chalara dieback of ash.

Historic Landscape Characterisation assessments provide a framework for describing and understanding how successive cultures have left their mark on the modern AONB landscape.



Enclosed Commons, Malvern Wells

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 of pasture, bordered by hedgerows and often containing hedgerow trees.
- 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.
- Far-reaching views from and towards the AONB.



Old Hollow, West Malvern

Key issues

Data published by Natural England in 2006 suggests that the essentially strong character of the area was maintained between 1999 and 2003¹³. Nevertheless, many forces for change that could affect different landscapes within the AONB remain. The county-based LCAs identify them in full but some of the key issues for the AONB 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, LP6, BDP7)

Recent decades have witnessed a significant reduction in sheep and cattle grazing on the high hills and the common lands. This has led to increased scrub, bracken and secondary woodland cover and a decrease in open grassland. Significant progress has been made to increase the quality and quantity of grazing activity and to reduce scrub, supported in recent years by funding from the Environmental Stewardship programme. More effort is still required, particularly as grazing is regarded as necessary to maintain the health of the Site of Special Scientific Interest.

There has been an increase in the use of polythene for the intensive 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. Such developments can be highly visible, potentially affecting people's enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape¹⁴.

13. Malvern Hills and Teme Valley Joint Character Area assessment, Countryside Quality Counts, Natural England (2006).

14. Policy Position Statement on Polytunnels, Campaign to Protect Rural England (2006) and Polytunnels Supplementary Planning Document Herefordshire Council (adopted December 2008).

Global market changes may lead to an increase in arable or horticultural production in the AONB.



Common edge dwelling, Castlemorton Common

Arable cultivation of the sandstone estate lands in the south of the AONB led to a historical loss of traditional grasslands and a loss of hedgerows as fields increased in size. There is evidence¹⁵ that this trend has reversed, with an increased area of permanent grassland and a decrease in the cropped area. Global market changes may lead to an increase in arable or horticultural production in the AONB. This may be at the expense of pasture, with consequent changes in the landscape.

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 hedgerows, grassland and orchards.

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.

In some areas, the strong regular enclosure pattern has broken down 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.

Woodland clearance and the gradual loss of trees along 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, BD01, BDP1)

Data shows a gradual increase in the number of small farms in the AONB in recent times¹⁶, probably because of the break-up of larger holdings. This can lead to development because of the need for buildings and facilities. Existing properties may be enlarged or new structures built. It can also lead to a loss in linear habitats such as hedgerows. There will be a growth in the size of settlements in and around the AONB. 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.

15. 'Statistical Digest for the Malvern Hills AONB', Centre for Rural Research (2003), An Evidence base for the Malvern Hills AONB', Centre for Rural Research (2007).

16. An Evidence base for the Malvern Hills AONB', Centre for Rural Research (2007).

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 can be out character with the area.

Climate change impacts (LP5, LP8)

Although trends in climate change may be apparent, their local effect is unpredictable. There is likely to be a greater need for water management. Regular flooding may lead to the reintroduction of water meadow management. Drier periods may increase the fire risk or help to accelerate erosion, if followed by severe downpours. There is a risk of increased subsidence of gleyed soils. Changes in vegetation patterns and agricultural land use may all affect the visual appearance and character of the AONB.

Loss and degradation of views (LP1, LP2, LP3, LP4, BDP2)

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 beyond and the setting of the AONB. Similarly, the hills themselves provide a very visible and prominent focus, especially when viewed from the north and east. 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. Natural England is preparing a viewshed analysis of the AONB.



Old Hollow, West Malvern



Polytunnels, Bromsberrow

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.

Aim

To conserve and enhance the features which contribute to the distinctive landscapes of the area.

Objective

L01 Conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape elements and features of the AONB, particularly those that are most sensitive or have little capacity for change.

Policies

LP1 Manage the landscape of the AONB in accordance with key documents such as the AONB Landscape Strategy, Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisations.

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

LP3 Identify and promote opportunities for positive landscape change to landowners, managers, government and all those with an influence over land.

LP4 Promote greater awareness and appreciation of the landscape character of the AONB among residents and visitors, providing opportunities for them to be involved in identifying and conserving locally distinctive features, views and landscapes.

LP5 Undertake surveys and research to better understand and monitor the condition, and rate of change, of landscape character.

Objective

L02 Implement appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures to address climate change.

Policies

LP6 Ensure that climate change adaptation and mitigation proposals are consistent with the special qualities of the AONB and minimise any adverse effects on the area.

LP7 Identify and support appropriate climate change mitigation works, such as new habitat creation, within and adjacent to the AONB.

LP8 Increase understanding and awareness of possible landscape effects of, and responses to, climate change.

Geodiversity

Background

Geodiversity is the range of rocks, fossils, minerals, soils, landforms and natural processes that go to make up the Earth's landscape and structure. It is a link between people, culture, landscape and biodiversity. The striking scenery in the AONB is ultimately dependent on the rocks that lie beneath the ground surface. Their shape, orientation and the range of mechanical and chemical properties they possess go to shape the earth. The variation in these features generates the wide range of landscape character types found in the AONB.

Geodiversity Action Plans (GAPs) provide a framework for identifying, conserving, enhancing and monitoring the geodiversity resource. Current GAPs exist for Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire.

Special features

- Very hard igneous and metamorphic rocks that form the high ground of the Malvern Hills ridge and date from the Precambrian period (prior to 542 million years ago).
- 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).
- 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 network 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.
- Quarries, revealing rock exposures and providing access to them.



Gullet Quarry

The striking scenery in the AONB is ultimately dependent on the rocks that lie beneath the ground surface.



Brachiopod Fossils, Mathon



Geological monitoring, Swinyard Hill

As well as shaping the landscape, geodiversity contributes to local distinctiveness and a sense of place.

Key issues

Lack of knowledge, appreciation and understanding (GP1, GP4, GP3)

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; or between the natural and built environments.

Visitor pressures (GP2, GP3, GP4)

Sites of geological interest are, in places, under pressure from high visitor use. Sensitive sites with unique features, such as Gullet Top Quarry, are regularly under visitor pressure on the Malvern Hills. Local Geological Sites (LGS) and other sites within the AONB (e.g. Whitman's Hill Quarry) can be used to 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 (GP1, GP3, GP4, BDO1)

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.

Climate change impacts (LP5)

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. Natural hazards such as flooding, landslips and rock falls may become more frequent.



Loxter Ashbed Quarry

Threats to Geological Sites (GP1, GP2)

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 47 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. Very few LGS are managed effectively. Loss of LGS arising from direct damage or neglect may result in the loss of exposures or features found nowhere else.

Aim

To preserve, promote and wisely use the geodiversity of the AONB.

Objective

GO1 Protect important geological and geomorphological sites.

Policies

GP1 Conserve the geodiversity resource in line with Geodiversity Action Plans.

GP2 Secure best practice in geodiversity management within and adjacent to designated sites.

GP3 Undertake survey, research and monitoring to secure complete information on the state of the AONB's geodiversity resource, including recording temporary exposures before reburying.

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.



Fossil identification

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.

Biodiversity

Background

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.

The Government published a Natural Environment White Paper in 2011¹⁷. It presumes that a healthy, properly functioning natural environment will sustain economic growth, prosperous communities and personal well-being. The Government also published Biodiversity 2020 in 2011. This strategy sets out how the quality of the environment will be improved over the next ten years. It builds on the policies contained in the Natural Environment White Paper¹⁸. 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.

The creation of a landscape that has bigger wildlife sites of better quality, more species and individuals, and is better joined is a key aim¹⁹. 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.

17. Natural Environment White Paper *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, published in 2011.

18. Defra, 'Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services', August 2011.

19. 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.



Bluebells, Suckley Hills

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 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.

In July 2012, Government published a Biodiversity Framework for England²⁰. The UK Biodiversity Partnership no longer operates and responsibility for delivery of a country-based framework is now at the county level in England. However, 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 (now defined by Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act within England) still forms the basis of much biodiversity work at the national level.

Since 2012, the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) is the preferred mechanism for capturing information regarding biodiversity action and delivery in the UK. BARS is a web based information system to support the conservation community. It will show where practical action is in place to benefit important habitats and species. It can give summaries of the data. The system is still being developed but anyone can contribute information to BARS. BARS helps establish the level of activity in place at any given time, where this is taking place, and what it is trying to achieve.

The Government publishes lists of priority habitats and species. The lists form the basis for prioritising nature conservation action. The AONB also contains important habitats and species that are not on national lists but are local priorities 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.



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

shutterstock, Vitaly Ilyaso

20. 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>.

Special features

Key AONB habitats	English priority habitat
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Yes
Lowland dry acid grassland	Yes
Lowland calcareous grassland	Yes
Lowland meadows	Yes
Traditional orchards	Yes
Wood pasture and parkland	Yes
Veteran trees	No
Streams	No
Hedgerows	Yes
Ponds	Yes
Wet woodland	Yes

Key AONB species	English priority species
Black Poplar	No
Noble Chafer	Yes
High Brown Fritillary Butterfly	Yes
Bullfinch	Yes
Skylark	Yes
Song Thrush	Yes
Barn Owl	No
Peregrine Falcon	No
Adder	Yes
Great Crested Newt	Yes
Dormouse	Yes
Bats	Yes
Lesser Horseshoe	
Barbastelle	
Soprano Pipistrelle	
Bechstein's	

Protected sites

- There are 15 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 2013, 99.7% of the SSSI area was in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable, recovering' condition. This is an improvement since 2006, when 89% of SSSI area reached that condition²¹.
- There is one Local Nature Reserve within the AONB at St Wulstan's (Malvern Wells).

21. Natural England 2013



Leigh Brook, Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve

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. In the Herefordshire part, there are 40 sites covering 1,773 ha. These local sites provide a comprehensive 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.

Key issues

Visitor pressures (BP2, BP6)

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), unrestricted parking, litter and fly tipping.

Reduction in grazing and other land management practices (agriculture and forestry) (BP2, BP6, BP1, BP3)

The special wildlife of the AONB is closely related to centuries 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. Current grant support schemes promote good conservation practices on all farm holdings. They also seek a more integrated approach to land management on the most valuable areas for nature.

A reduction in grazing activity has been a major problem in recent decades, especially on the high hills and surrounding commons. These areas have suffered an increase in scrub cover and a decline in grassland condition and open bracken cover as a result. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in grazing activity in these areas.

Climate change impacts (BP1, BP3, LP7)

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 without a bout of freezing. Changes in climate may restrict the growth of 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.

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). 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.



Meadow, Suckley

There is a need to develop a landscape that is resilient and adaptable to change.



Dormouse

Some species of plant and animals exist within the AONB that are considered to harm the biodiversity of the area.

Problem species (BP3, BP5, FP5)

Some species of plant and animals exist within the AONB that are considered to harm the biodiversity of the area. There are problems caused by deer and grey squirrels. Populations of wild deer in England have been increasing rapidly in the last 40 years. At times, the population grows above the capacity of the land to support it without damage. At that point, there is damage to crops, vegetables, fruit or growing timber or any other property on the land. There is also a risk of road traffic accidents and infection with diseases that can affect farm livestock and in some cases humans. Grey squirrels strip tree bark, damaging timber and specimen trees.

Trees such as Sycamore and Ash have increased on the open hills²² with scrub and bramble encroachment, resulting in the decline of grassland habitats. Other plants such as Japanese 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.

There are five injurious weeds that are classified under The Weeds Act 1959. These are:

- common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*);
- spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*);
- creeping thistle (*Cirsium avense*);
- broadleaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*); and
- curled dock (*Rumex crispus*).

It is illegal to allow these weeds to spread to agricultural land, particularly grazing areas or land used to produce hay or silage. The Ragwort Control Act 2003 exists, alongside its specific Code of Practice, because of the high level of risk ragwort can pose to animals.

Honey bees make an important 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.

Lack of data (BP5)

The three counties have adopted Biodiversity (Delivery) Frameworks. These cover all land within the AONB and contain action plans for key habitats and species within the area. There are also a range of surveys and inventories that provide different levels of information about the biodiversity resource in the area. All English Priority Habitats in the AONB are mapped.

However, there are areas within the AONB where the data is poor. These gaps must be filled to ensure good decision-making in the land management and development control arenas.

22. 'Management Plan for the land managed by the Malvern Hills Conservators', MHC (2006).

Losses to development and sources of compensation (BP1, BP2, BP4, BP7, BD01)

Development without thought can have a harmful effect on nature. For example, the conversion of barns can disturb bat roosts, and some development may break up wildlife corridors. However, good planning policies can minimise this impact. There are national planning policies that aim to improve the natural environment²³. 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.

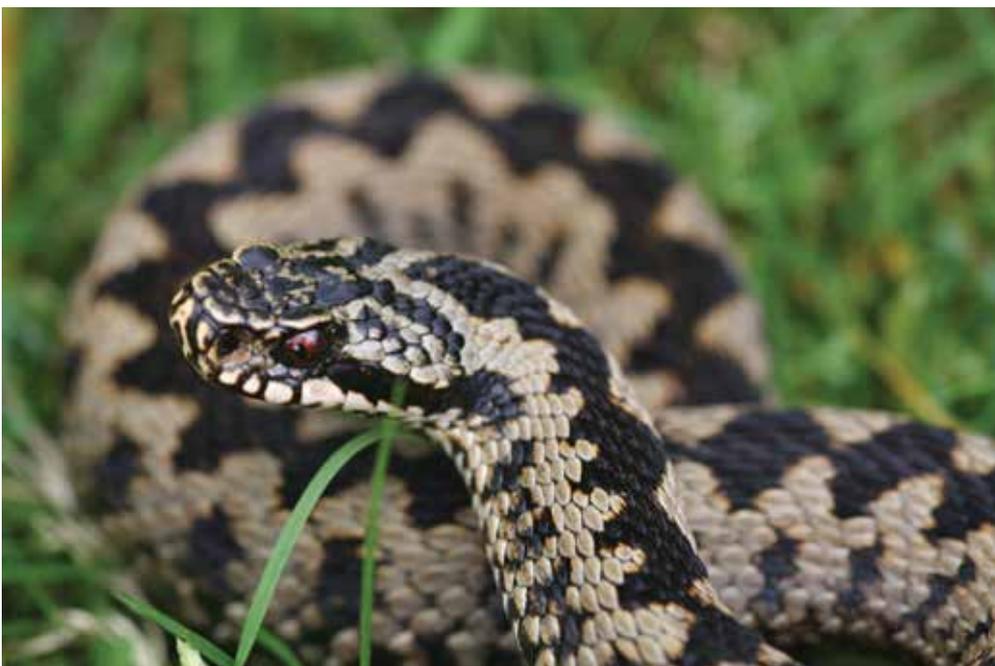
There are two sources of compensation in the planning system. They are biodiversity offsetting and the Community Infrastructure Levy²⁴. Biodiversity offsets are conservation activities that give wildlife benefits to compensate for losses. They are different from other types of green compensation, as they need to show measurable results. They are applied through planning conditions and 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.

Habitat fragmentation and the need for joined-up management (BP2, BP3)

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, increase their resilience and their connectivity.

Nature does not recognise the AONB boundary. National planning policy recognises the need for strategies at the landscape-scale to help nature²⁵. There is a need to consider land outside of the AONB as well as within it.

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.



Male Adder

23. National Planning Policy Framework, Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicyframework/

24. 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.

25. Paragraph 117: National Planning Policy Framework, Department for Communities and Local Government (2012).

Species loss can be attributed to one or a number of factors such as loss and fragmentation of habitat, disturbance, climate change.

Species Loss (BP1, BP2)

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. An example is the High Brown Fritillary, which appears to have been lost from the area during the period of the previous AONB management plan.

Aim

To value, conserve, restore and wisely use nature.

Objective

B01 Establish and maintain coherent and resilient ecological networks across the AONB and beyond.

Policies

BP1 Conserve, enhance and expand key habitats and populations of key species in line with local biodiversity priorities and the England Biodiversity Strategy 2020.

BP2 Restore the condition of degraded habitats in line with local and national biodiversity priorities.

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

BP4 In exercising development control decisions, secure developer contributions to enhance the natural environment.

Objective

B02 Ensure that the benefits and services provided by the natural environment are understood and accurately valued by decision-makers at all levels.

Policies

BP5 Undertake survey and research to provide decision-makers with accurate and appropriate data.

BP6 Improve knowledge and understanding of the AONB's biodiversity, to enable evaluation of the effectiveness of policies and actions.

BP7 Safeguard biodiversity from potential damaging impacts arising from development or other activities.

Historic environment

Background

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.

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 England²⁶, 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.

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 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.

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.

Studies by English Heritage 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.



Oast houses, Mathon

The conservation of locally listed heritage assets is a material consideration in planning decisions that directly affect them or their setting.

26. 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.

Studies by English Heritage and the three county councils have significantly improved our understanding of the historic environment of the AONB.



Medieval moated site, Bromesberrow Estate

Special features

- Iron Age hill forts at British Camp and Midsummer Hill.
- The shire ditch – a ridge-top boundary interpreted as having prehistoric origins.
- 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).
- 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 and wells.
- Artistic associations with poets (Elizabeth Barrett Browning), architects (Voysey) and composers (Elgar).
- Eight Scheduled Monuments.

Key issues

Conserving undesignated heritage assets (HP1, HP3, HP4, HP5, IP6)

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 comprehensive record of locally distinct heritage assets.

Lack of data (HP2)

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 English Heritage. However, much research still needs to be done. There is a need to ensure that data exists also for undesignated heritage assets. HERs should hold records more representative of the historic environment of an area and its condition so that this can help guide the priorities for its conservation and enhancement.

Poor awareness of the historic environment (HP1, HP4, HP5)

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.

Additional measures may be needed to protect features from neglect and to bring them into good condition.



Eastnor Deer Park

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...



Restored Squatter's Cottage, Wellington Heath

Climate change impacts (HP2)

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, HP5)

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, HP4)

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 2006²⁷, for example, found that this Scheduled Monument was suffering erosion as a result of informal recreational use.

27. See 'The Malvern Hills an Ancient Landscape' by Mark Bowden (ISBN: 1 873592 82 5).

Impacts of street lighting (HP1, BDP3, TRP3)

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.

The remains of heritage assets can be damaged by cultivation and drainage.

Aim

To conserve and enhance the historic environment of the AONB, including the significance of its heritage assets, their setting and the historic character of the landscape.

Objective

H01 Conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage of the AONB through appropriate funding, management and awareness raising.

Policies

- HP1** Conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment of the AONB in accordance with key documents such as Historic Landscape Characterisations, Conservation Area Appraisals and English Heritage advice and guidance.
- HP2** Identify and improve the evidence base of locally important heritage assets of the AONB in order to understand better the significance and condition of the historic environment, which will underpin future policy.
- HP3** Prepare and review appropriate management documents for key heritage assets to improve future conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.
- HP4** Promote greater public understanding of, and engagement with, the historic environment of the AONB.
- HP5** Encourage the sustainable use of historic buildings, particularly those identified as being at risk.

Farming and forestry

Background

Farming and forestry still represent the significant forms of land use in the AONB. They continue to provide local jobs and income. In recent years, livestock prices have been buoyant and there has been a growing interest in craft cider making. The British soft fruit industry has also been highly successful in producing a range of fruit over a longer growing period by taking advantage of advances in technology. 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 EU²⁸. There is no link between subsidies and production, so farmers have flexibility in how they run their business.
- 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 managing it to improve the quality of the environment. The scheme is administered by Natural England on behalf of Defra.
- The Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme is part of the Rural Development Programme for England. The aim is to help farming, forestry and horticultural businesses to become more efficient at using resources. This scheme helps to make business more profitable and resilient whilst reducing the effect of farming on the environment.

Trees provide major environmental services to society, as well as a direct economic value and social amenity.



Hay harvest, Castlemorton

28. This is known as Cross Compliance.

- The Woodland Grant Scheme provides incentives for people to create and manage woodlands on sites all over Great Britain. The Forestry Commission pays grants for establishing and looking after woodlands and forests.
- The Energy Crops Scheme run by Natural England offers grants to farmers to establish miscanthus and short rotation coppice. Energy crops are a substitute for fossil fuels; they can contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and help to combat climate change.

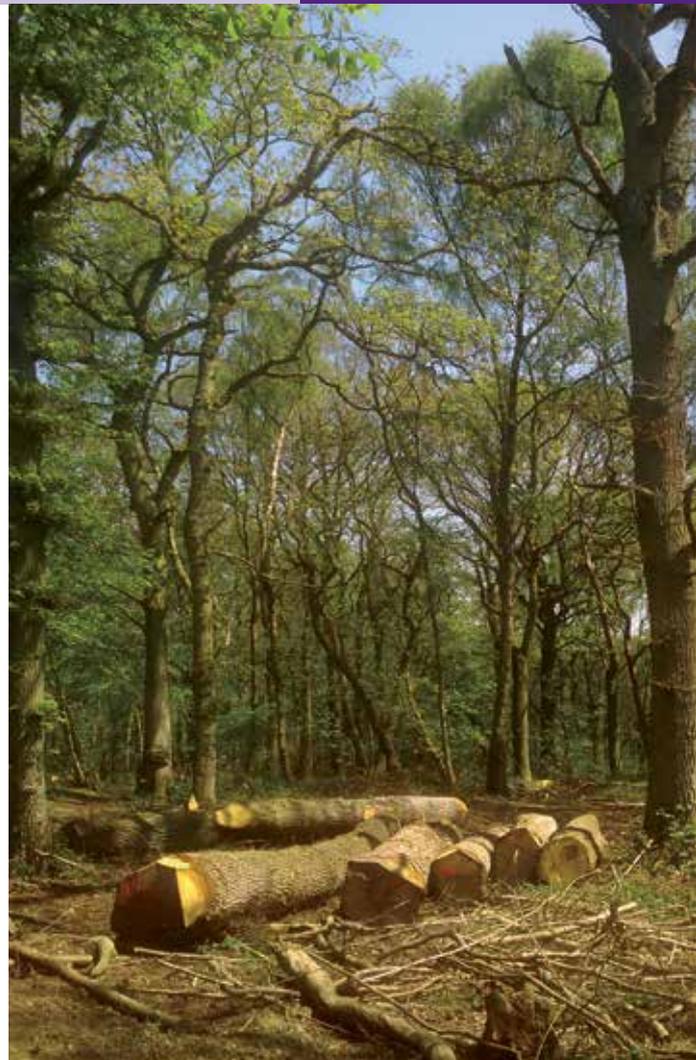
The future of such schemes is uncertain. The European Commission is reforming the Common Agricultural Policy. It wants to replace the Single Payment Scheme, revise the rules that will guide the next Rural Development Programme, and form new initiatives such as 'greening', 'capping' and a dedicated 'small farmers' scheme. The UK Government's main aims are to:

- substantially reduce the CAP budget;
- make EU agriculture less reliant on subsidies and more competitive internationally;
- improve the way the CAP is used to reward farmers for good environmental stewardship; and
- simplify the CAP for farmers and authorities.

It looks likely that grant schemes will be more integrated in the future. Government agencies are already working more closely to achieve this. There is a proposal to establish a New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS) that will incorporate the best elements of Environmental Stewardship, Catchment Sensitive Farming and the England Woodland Grants Scheme

The Water Framework Directive²⁹ requires that all inland and coastal waters within defined river basin districts must reach at least *good status* by 2027. In response, the 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. Building on the need to manage at the catchment scale, it is preparing a Catchment Management Plan.

Trees have a huge significance in the AONB landscape, contributing to the heritage and rural economy. Trees provide major environmental services to society, as well as a direct economic value and social amenity³⁰. 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.



Woodland management, Gullet Wood

29. Council Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (Water Framework Directive).

30. UK National Ecosystem Assessment: <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/> and <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/uknea/>.

The framework's aims include encouraging economically viable woodland, improving understanding of forestry, and demonstrating how it can help maximize benefits to health...

The West Midlands Forestry Framework provides some forestry policy for the area³¹. The framework identifies what is special about forestry and woodlands in the West Midlands. It provides guidance on how to bring benefits to the area through managing its woodland assets. The framework's aims include encouraging economically viable woodland, improving understanding of forestry, and demonstrating how it can help maximize benefits to health, recreation, recycling and biodiversity conservation. These aims are wholly in line with those of this management plan. The framework is underpinned by the 'Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests' and the 'Keepers of Time' ancient and native woodland policy.

Key facts³²

- Agriculture is the dominant land use within the AONB, occupying around 80% of the area.
- Permanent grassland accounts for 51.3% of the AONB area, arable for 27.6% and woodland cover around 5% of the utilised agricultural area.
- Woodland covers around 20% of the total AONB area.
- 58.4% of all farms in the AONB are devoted wholly to livestock. 15% are horticultural.
- 61.9% of farms are smaller than 20ha.
- 88% of all livestock in the AONB are sheep with cattle accounting for approximately 11%.

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.

31. Growing our future: West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework (Forestry Commission 2004). www.forestry.gov.uk/wm-rff - current annual Delivery Plan to 2010-2013.

32. From 'June Survey of Agriculture for 2010, Defra.

Key issues

Intensification of food production (F01, FP1)

Growth in global demand for food, together with land given over to biofuel production, drives up commodity prices worldwide. There may be pressure to intensify food production in the UK, with a potential loss of 'conservation land'. The rising costs of inputs, such as fertilisers and energy, may temper such action. In the Malvern Hills AONB, the loss of pastureland to arable production is a potential concern. The intensification of production may damage the landscape, the historic environment and biodiversity.

Declining farm and forest incomes (F01)

There is a general decline in profitable forms of farming and forestry despite the increases in the global price of raw materials such as wheat and timber. The competition from imported goods is increasing. There is less money in the rural economy and fewer jobs in agriculture. Despite some increases in the price of milk and meat, livestock farming can still be difficult. This is due to the rapidly increasing price of fuel and animal feedstuffs, coupled with higher standards of animal welfare. Collectively these could threaten the future of this key land use.

Climate change impacts (F01, FP4, FP5)

Predicted climate change effects, such as warmer winters and changes in seasonal rainfall and storm patterns, 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. New agricultural crops may increase the demand for water. Wetter summers can reduce crop yields, as occurred in 2012.

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)

Tree cover in the AONB has already been depleted by Dutch Elm disease. In the past few years, a number of new tree and plant pests and pathogens have emerged as significant risks. Chalara dieback of ash and acute oak decline are but two examples. 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. In view of the rising threat to our trees, the Government has made preparing for and managing risk from plant disease a top priority. Tree diseases have the potential to affect dramatically the landscape character of the AONB.

There is a general decline in profitable forms of farming and forestry despite the increases in the global price of raw materials such as wheat and timber.



Ash leaves

There are courses that are helping to revive the traditions that still have a valuable role to play in countryside management.

Impact of existing coniferous trees within ancient semi-natural woodland sites (FP3, FP4)

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, usually conifers, planted in their place. This has damaged the character of the AONB and its biodiversity. Whilst it is now uncommon to plant conifers in ancient woods, there are many existing plantations on ancient woodland sites. These sites need restoration.

Loss of skills in agricultural and woodland management practices (FP8)

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 established land management practices.

Lack of sustainable woodland management (FP1, FP2, FP3, FP4)

Many woodlands in the area are small, fragmented and difficult to access. 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.



Worcester Black Pears



Uncultivated field margin, Colwall

Lack of 'local' food and markets (FP1, FP2, FP6, IP4)

The production of locally distinctive food and forestry products can help to conserve and enhance the unique landscape and wildlife of the AONB. The development of the local products sector needs more than just people and funds. There is a need for good services, such as abattoirs and local shops. 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 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 an AONB brand (see Tourism).

Management of cider and perry orchards (FP2, BDP4)

In line with a growth in demand for soft fruit and cider there has been an increase in the number of new orchards in the area. This is to be welcomed. However, the management of some commercial operations can yield very little conservation or environmental benefit. At the same time, a lack of management in some traditional orchards is hastening the demise of these very valuable wildlife habitats.

Using goods locally is good for the environment.

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.

Need for sustainable soil and water management (FP7)

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. The over use of fertilizers and pesticides can cut into profit and damage the environment through the pollution of waterways. 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 bee numbers (FP5)

Bees make an important contribution to sustainable agriculture and the environment. 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 Plan³³. 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.

Bees are susceptible to pests and diseases, which have increased significantly in the last 5 to 10 years. Current risks include American Foulbrood and European Foulbrood, varroa mites and associated viruses. Colony losses due to varroa infestation have increased since 2001. Potential exotic risks include the small hive beetle, parasitic brood mites and the Asian hornet. Locally, beekeeping associations operate disease control and self-help schemes and provide practical advice to members on disease recognition, varroa control and good husbandry.

Impacts of farm diversification (FO1, FP1)

In difficult times, farmers have to find either additional or new sources of income. They can grow new crops and/or move into other sectors, such as tourism and recreation. They can 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.

While good for the rural economy, diversification has 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. The conversion of barns into dwellings may reduce roosting places for barn owls and bats.

33. Healthy Bees – Protecting and improving the health of honey bees in England and Wales, Defra (March 2009).

Aim

To support a viable farming and forestry sector which helps to maintain the distinctive character of the area.

Objective

FO1 Ensure that sustainable farming and forestry remain the primary means by which the distinctive landscapes of the AONB are managed.

Policies

- FP1** Encourage the take-up of grant options and management practices that benefit the distinctive natural and historic environment of the AONB.
- FP2** Bring woodlands, orchards and other characteristic habitats into favourable conservation condition through management regimes that provide an economic return; for example, through the production of timber, wood fuel and other sustainable uses.
- FP3** Ensure that all new woodland planting in the AONB is largely of native species; no more than 20% being non-native species.
- FP4** Promote targeted native woodland creation in appropriate locations.
- FP5** Support appropriate measures to monitor and control pests, diseases and invasive non-native plant and animal species that damage biodiversity resources.
- FP6** Promote local and seasonal produce and support the development of local services and markets.
- FP7** Identify and promote good agricultural practices that encourage:
- sustainable utilisation of soil, minimising erosion
 - effective water catchment management
 - avoidance of direct pollution and measures to reduce diffuse pollution
 - farm waste minimisation and recycling.
- FP8** Maintain and develop the skills required to manage the landscape and its special qualities.

In difficult times, farmers have to find either additional or new sources of income.

Introduction

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.

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.

The local economy has a broad base. Agriculture supports some communities, though some farmers are moving into tourism and recreation to maintain their incomes. There are also businesses and high-tech industries 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.

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.

Local communities need local services but some shops are closing; and public transport is being cut. 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.



Suckley Post Office

A vision for 2040

Community

- 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 jobs and 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, using local materials wherever possible.
- 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 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.
- 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.

Conserving and enhancing the AONB involves meeting the social and economic needs of its people.



Farmers market, Malvern

The AONB is home to around 12,000 people. ...Over the years, local people have looked after the landscape we now cherish.

Living and working

Background

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.

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 environmental services it provides. Most know the risks to their brand image, security of resources and their bottom line if they do not.

Local authorities have helped set up bodies to work at the local level. They are known as Strategic Partnerships. Membership comes from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Their role is to create sustainable community strategies. These strategies aim to meet people's needs, improve the quality of life and achieve vibrant and sustainable communities in the future. The Strategic Partnerships generally cover a county and Local Strategic Partnerships, such as the Malvern Hills Local Strategic Partnership, work underneath them.

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.

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.

The Government is placing 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 Act³⁴ 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.

A number of parishes are now considering or preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans³⁵. 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.

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

35. Para 183, National Planning Policy Framework, Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) and the Localism Act 2011.

Key facts³⁶

- 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 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 higher³⁷

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 experts³⁸.
- 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.



Former Post Office, Cradley

36. From 'An Evidence base for the Malvern Hills AONB', Centre for Rural Research (2007).

37. Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011. Annual Population Survey

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

Key issues

Changes in communities (LW01, LWP3, FP8, RP6)

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)

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 (£212,244) and Worcestershire (£204,286) are higher than those in the West Midlands (£175,329) but less than in the UK as a whole (£238,293)³⁹. As income levels for residents in Herefordshire (average £395.90 per week) are less than the average for England (£512.10)⁴⁰, affordability is a key issue, especially for those on low incomes who want to remain in the area.

It is particularly important that people who manage the rural environment and conserve the special features of the AONB are able to find a base in the area. There is a need to provide affordable housing within the AONB, and indeed there is a history of such activity in the local area at places like Eastnor and Madresfield. 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, evidence is developed at the county level and 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.

Litter and fly-tipping (IP1)

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, and dog fouling are also problems at car parks and along some public paths.

Large carbon footprints (LW01, LWP2, LWP3)

Despite some improvements, the area has a much larger carbon footprint than other areas. For example, 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.⁴¹

Lack of awareness of the AONB (LWP1, IP5)

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. 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.



Colwall Primary School tree planting

39. Land Registry of England and Wales, Crown copyright (October to December 2012). http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/uk_house_prices/html/houses.stm

40. The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, National Office for Statistics (2012)

41. Vision 21 - The Malvern Hills Partnership Our Future Together: A sustainable community strategy for Malvern Hills District 2006 - 2021, Malvern Hills District Council, (2006)

Variable coverage in telecommunications (LWP3)

Modern telecommunications, including access to high-speed broadband, are vitally important to a successful rural economy. Many communities across the AONB still have little or no access to high-speed broadband. This is an important service both for local enterprise and to enable better access to services across the area. 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.⁴²

The Government wants everyone in the UK able to access broadband speeds of at least 2 megabits per second (Mbps) and 90% of the UK receiving far greater speeds (at least 24Mbps). Fibre optic broadband has the highest download rate of any internet access service, with speeds up to 100Mbps⁴³. The government is providing money to help stimulate private sector investment in rural broadband, and to ensure that the benefits of improved broadband infrastructure reach beyond the limits of where it is commercially viable to install it. Worcestershire County Council is working with partners to bring access to Superfast Broadband to Worcestershire, with speeds of 30+Mbps for 90% of all businesses and residents by 2015. There is a similar programme run by Gloucestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council working in partnership, its end date is 2016. The councils require local people to register their interest to provide evidence of demand.

Young people, in particular, leave rural communities to seek work and affordable homes in towns.

Aim

Secure communities with a high quality of life that appreciate and care for the AONB.

Objective

LW01 Enable vibrant communities to grow sustainably by stimulating economic prosperity while conserving and enhancing the distinctive character of the area.

Policies

LWP1 Support the production of community-led plans, strategies and statements (such as Neighbourhood Development Plans) that satisfy the requirements of Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000, and encourage and maintain the vitality and diversity of rural community life.

LWP2 Support community initiatives that promote the management of key habitats, appropriate renewable energy schemes, energy efficiency, recycling, community transport etc.

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.

LWP4 Support the provision of a variety of housing that is appropriate to the character of the area and meets local community needs.

42. 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)

43. Stimulating private sector investment to achieve a transformation in broadband in the UK by 2015, DCMS (2013)

To maintain the area's special qualities, it is vital that a framework exists to manage this change effectively and sympathetically.

Built development

Background

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 change effectively and sympathetically. The principal elements of this are the National Planning Policy Framework⁴⁴ and the Local Development Plans. Applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the Local Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

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. Of particular interest to the AONB, the advice to local planning authorities is to set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife, geodiversity sites, heritage assets or landscape areas will be judged⁴⁵. 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.

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.

Relevant authorities have a legal duty to have regard to the AONB⁴⁶. 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

44. National Planning Framework, Department for Communities and Local Government, ISBN: 978-1-4098-3413-7 (March 2012) www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicyframework/

45. Paragraphs 113, 115, 116, 133 & 135, National Planning Policy Framework.

46. 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".



Homogenous, modern development, Fruitlands

also important factors. The policy direction is to refuse planning permission for major developments in AONBs unless there is a prime public interest⁴⁷. 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.

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. 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 positive⁴⁸.

Special features

- Protection offered to the AONB through planning law and policy at national and local level.
- Rural character and scale of settlements contribute to local distinctiveness, landscape character and sense of tranquillity.
- Views to and from the Malvern Hills.
- 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

Shortage of affordable housing (BD01, BDP1, BDP4, LWP1, LWP4)

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 (BD01, BDP9)

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.



West Malvern from the hills

47. From para 115 & 116, National Planning Policy Framework.

48. Guidance on Keeping Horses in the Landscape, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership 2010



Malvern stone wall

The Malvern Hills are very visible in the wider landscape and the hills afford good views out. The contribution of setting to the significance of the AONB is often expressed by reference to views.

Reflecting landscape and historic character in new development (BDP1, BDP9, LP1)

Planning tools such as Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisations now cover 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 to and from the Malvern Hills AONB (BDP2)

The Malvern Hills are very visible in the wider landscape and the hills afford good views out. The contribution of setting to the significance of the AONB is often expressed by reference to views. Development or change may harm people's enjoyment of the area. Planning policy and decisions on planning applications should take account of the importance of key views (both short and long distance) to and from the AONB. The AONB Partnership has produced guidance on identifying and grading views and viewpoints. Natural England is preparing a viewshed analysis of the AONB.

Loss of Local distinctiveness in the built environment (BD01, BDP1, BDP8, BDP9, LWP1, IP6)

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, stonewalls, 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.

Understanding the cumulative impacts of development (BDP10)

One of the changes and/or biggest threats to the AONB comes from the cumulative impact of numbers of small developments. The affect of each individual proposal may be limited but the cumulative effect can be significant and damaging to the natural beauty in the longer term. Planning policy and development control decision-making needs to reflect this fact.

Loss of character through infilling (BD01, BDP1, BDP4, BDP9)

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.

Small 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 to meeting current community needs and aspirations. Permission for development should usually be refused on these sites.

Impacts of agricultural buildings and infrastructure (BDO1, BDP1, BDP3, BDP7)

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.

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.

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. 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.

A key issue in the local area is the use of polytunnels and their visual impacts and effects on the landscape character of the AONB. Polytunnels are vital to the future of the soft fruit sector as they enable the production of increased quantities and qualities of soft fruit. They also reduce food miles, which is good for the environment. However, very few locations within the AONB are able to accommodate polytunnel developments of any significant scale. 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. A coordinated approach on this issue should be sought between the three local planning authorities.



Sympathetic barn conversion, Petty France

Agricultural buildings are often located in areas of open countryside, where permission for other buildings is hard to obtain.



Stables close to domestic buildings, Mathon

Sustainable design and construction is concerned with implementing sustainable development at the scale of individual sites and buildings.

Impact of equestrian developments (BDP1, BDP5)

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.

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 (BDP1)

The AONB provides an ideal opportunity to demonstrate best practice in sustainable housing 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 of how buildings are designed and used. The Code for Sustainable Homes⁴⁹ is the national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new homes.

The Code aims to reduce our carbon emissions and create homes that are more sustainable. It should help to prevent development depleting the AONB's environmental services. Reducing the need for energy, saving water and dealing efficiently with waste will make a big difference. The orientation of buildings, choice of materials and the design of elevations are major factors. These can minimise dependence on artificial heating, cooling and lighting. 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.

Finding the right renewable energy schemes (BD01, BDP1, BDP6)

The Government is legally bound to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% (from the 1990 baseline) by 2050⁵⁰. It plans to do this by moving to a more energy efficient, low-carbon economy⁵¹. 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.

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 acceptable if they add extraneous elements to the landscape.

49. The Code for Sustainable Homes: Setting the standard in sustainability for new homes
Department for Communities and Local Government 2008

50. Climate Change Act 2008

51. The Carbon Plan Department of Energy & Climate Change, 2011

The development of fracking in the AONB (BD01, BDP1, GP2)

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 Government has identified Eastnor as an area that may see some fracking. There are no proposals yet and working in this area may be technically difficult and costly. Any proposals will need to be considered on their own merits, based on a thorough assessment of impacts.

Lack of local stone and materials (BDP8)

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. Materials brought in can be costly to 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. This does not apply to 'naturally occurring' loose materials, for example, those derived from erosion, which should not be used. Control is through the Minerals Local Plans being developed by the County Councils and Herefordshire Council.

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.

Light pollution (BDP3)

Light pollution occurs when artificial light intrudes on the night-time setting. 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. There are two main sources of light pollution in the AONB, street lighting and that associated with buildings. Badly designed lighting that illuminates the sky rather than/in addition to the ground is particularly damaging.

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, bats exploit low light levels and bright light disorients them⁵². It is possible to switch lights off in some areas for a part of the night and dim all other lighting. This cuts carbon emissions and energy costs.

The need for external lighting for buildings, car parks and recreation grounds needs careful assessment on a case-by-case basis.

Power generation from renewable sources of energy is an important element in the development of a low-carbon economy.



Light pollution over Worcester (in distance) and Malvern

52. Alison Fure, Bats and lighting in *The London Naturalist*, No. 85, 2006

Aim

To ensure that development reaches a high standard of design and sustainability that reflects local character.

Objective

BD01 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.

Policies

BDP1 Development in the AONB and its setting should be in accordance with approved local design and capacity studies, including the AONB Guidance on Building Design.

BDP2 Development proposals should be informed by the need to protect or enhance key views to and from the AONB. The AONB guidance on identifying and grading views and viewpoints should be used in relevant cases.

BDP3 Lighting schemes, particularly in the rural areas of the AONB, should be kept to a minimum and only installed where absolutely necessary. All lighting should accord with good practice in minimising light pollution.

BDP4 There should be a presumption against the loss of traditional orchards to development, or changes to other uses.

BDP5 Equestrian development should proceed in accordance with best practice guidelines, including the AONB guidance on keeping horses in the landscape.

BDP6 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.

BDP7 Farm-scale polytunnels for commercial use would not normally be an accepted form of development in the AONB. Where there is an essential need for such developments and no other suitable location is available outside the AONB, a whole farm approach should be taken to ensure an acceptable location, design, and scale.

BDP8 Support the recycling, re-use and limited extraction of small quantities of locally distinctive building materials, such as Malvern stone, where this is needed to help retain local distinctiveness in the built environment.

BDP9 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.

BDP10 Monitor the cumulative impact of small-scale development within the AONB and use data to inform decisions and the development or revision of relevant policy.

Tourism

Background

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 heritage⁵³. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy.

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 small area of what is a small AONB.

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 and its Rural Tourism Action Plan. The accord acknowledges the importance of AONBs as being at the centre of the development of sustainable rural tourism.⁵⁴ 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 Statement⁵⁵.

Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy.

53. Malvern Hills AONB Visitor Survey 1999-2000, Heart of England Tourist Board 2000

54. Working Towards Sustainable Tourism in England's AONBs, Defra, Visit England, NAAONB (2013)

55. Agreed by the Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee in December 2012.



Eastnor Castle

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 motivation⁵⁶”. 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.



Autumn Show, Three Counties Showground

Special features

- Unspoiled 'natural' environment.
- Dramatic scenery and spectacular views.
- 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 (T01, TP3)

Visitor surveys show that the vast majority of tourists visiting Herefordshire and Worcestershire are day-trippers (83% in 2009). Day visitors put far less income into the local economy (28.5% of visitor economy) than those who stay overnight⁵⁷. Generating greater overnight stays is a key aim of tourism strategies for the area.

Visit England report that in 2012, British residents took 104 million overnight trips in England, totalling 310 million nights away from home, with expenditure of £19.5 billion. £187 was spent per trip; with the average spend per night at £63 per person. The number of domestic overnight trips taken in England was unchanged compared to 2011, but the amount spent rose by 9%. The volume and value of domestic trips in 2012 were at their highest levels since the start of the current survey in 2006⁵⁸.

Poor visitor awareness (TP2, TP6, IP2)

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. 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. There is a need to market the Malverns as a destination in its own right, including links to the adjacent towns of Malvern and Ledbury. Doing this effectively, and providing tourists with the information to build quality experiences will help to turn days into stays. Up-to-date information on the numbers, activities, needs and aspirations of visitors is also a requirement.

56. Measuring Tourism Locally Guidance Note One: Definitions of Tourism, Tourism Intelligence Unit, The Office for National Statistics (2010).

57. A Tourism Strategy for Herefordshire 2010 – 2015 by Stevens and Associates for Herefordshire Council (2010)

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



Old Country House B&B, Mathon

There is a need to raise awareness and to engage the local tourism industry and key stakeholders in sustainability.

Need for sustainable tourism (TP4)

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.

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 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, TP5)

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.



Event at Eastnor Deerpark

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

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.

Aim

To secure a thriving tourism economy that values and supports the special qualities of the AONB.

Objective

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.

Policies

TP1 Stimulate and support sustainable tourism practices in the AONB.

TP2 Promote the AONB and adjoining areas as a sustainable destination in its own right.

TP3 Provide a quality public realm with good access and accessibility to facilities and features that attract tourists.

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 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.

TP6 Work in partnership to develop the Malverns as an area for showcasing new tourism technologies.



Elgar Statue and
Tourist Information
Centre, Malvern

Transport and accessibility

Background

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.

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. The rail service is adequate to meet local demand to travel, as are passenger facilities at the stations. Long distance express coaches serve the AONB well. There are direct connections to London, Birmingham, Cardiff and a number of other major national destinations.

With recent reductions in the availability of public funding, many local bus services have been rationalised. The frequency and reach of the local bus network is now in decline, particularly in more sparsely populated rural areas. In the urban areas, continued investment in bus stop infrastructure (including shelters, bus stop flags and timetable cases) contributes towards improving the attractiveness of remaining commercial bus services as an alternative to the private car.

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. This demand-responsive service is available to both local residents and visitors, so accessibility by passenger transport remains very good across the area. The AONB Partnership has helped to support the establishment of car share schemes and electric bike hire in Colwall and then in Malvern via Colwall Greener.

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.

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 people⁵⁹ 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.

Freight traffic in the AONB is light, especially since the closure of the Malvern Water bottling plant at Colwall. However, the number of LGVs and other light freight vehicles is growing, in line with national trends. 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.



Colwall Train Station timetable

There are direct connections to London, Birmingham, Cardiff and a number of other major national destinations.

⁵⁹ 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.



Family cycle ride, Mathon

There are plans to connect the AONB with the National Cycle Network through the development of NCN 46 (Worcester to Abergavenny).

There are no designated Air Quality Management Areas in the AONB area, which suggests that air quality in the area remains broadly good.

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.

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.

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 (LTP3). 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.
- A comprehensive and integrated road-based passenger transport service, made up of Community Transport, Bus and Taxi services, especially for the populated areas.
- 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.

At peak times, the AONB can experience high levels of car traffic and a high demand for parking.

Key issues

Impacts of car traffic (TR01, TRP2, TRP5)

The quality of road access to the AONB and the existence of extensive car parking opportunities (many of them free) has resulted in access to the Malvern Hills AONB being car dominated. 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 and around the Three Counties showground on event days. 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.

A small network of traffic counters monitors traffic flows in different parts of the AONB. Some 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. The level of use of the private car by local people (as opposed to visitors) to reach the hills and nearby countryside is unknown, although schemes that provide local people with reduced price car parking on the hills clearly promotes the car as the mode of choice for accessing these areas.

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 big effect on tranquillity. One way to retain tranquillity in other areas is to keep volumes of traffic low on the rural road network. Appropriately managed reductions in speed limits and landscaping can also contribute to noise reduction in more sensitive areas.

The area's carbon footprint is high, partly because of the reliance on the motor car. Encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport is a key action to reduce carbon emissions.



Traditional road sign, Colwall

One way to retain tranquillity in other areas is to keep volumes of traffic low on the rural road network.

Poor facilities for walkers and cyclists (TR01, TRP2, TRP6)

There is a shortage of targeted provision for walkers and cyclists. They need safer walking and cycling routes; and integrated public transport services. This is especially true in and around built up areas, within and outside the AONB. Shared use routes may also benefit horse riders.

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 (TR01, TRP5, TRP7, IP3)

For a rural area, the AONB has enjoyed a relatively good public transport system. However, this is at risk with reductions in some bus services. The now cancelled Hills Hopper bus service was well used by elderly people and may well have served a leisure function in its own right, providing a tour of the AONB. As bus services have declined, the provision of community transport services has increased significantly to 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. One result is significant isolation for people who do not have access to a car.

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 (TRP1, TRP3, IP6)

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 AONB Partnership has also worked to establish, for a trial period, a more conservation-friendly approach to the cutting of some grass verges.



Wildflower verges, AONB

Cost of travel (TRP4)

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.

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 mobility⁶⁰. This is due to limited transport choices. Fuel prices are rising.

Aim

To reduce the impact of car traffic and to promote a sustainable approach to transport management.

Objective

TR01 To reduce the impact of the private car whilst promoting a more sustainable approach to accessibility management.

Policies

TRP1 Highway management and design should be in accordance with the AONB Guidance on Highway Design.

TRP2 Restore and maintain tranquillity in the AONB through protection and traffic mitigation and reduction measures.

TRP3 Encourage the reuse and refurbishment of appropriate highway furniture and fittings to strengthen the special character of the AONB.

TRP4 Promote the coordinated 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 Develop dedicated routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders within the AONB and between the AONB and surrounding areas.

TRP7 Develop and promote sustainable transport options to meet local accessibility requirements.

The most significant impacts of the costs of travel are on young people and low-income households.

60. 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.



Exploring nature

Introduction

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 form the extensive “green infrastructure” of the AONB that provides significant economic, social and health benefits⁶¹.

The area boasts a wealth of heritage to find and study. The geological variety and centuries 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.

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.

61. “Benefits of green infrastructure.” Report to Defra and CLG. Forest Research, (2010).

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, for example, 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 Paper⁶², 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' 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.

Information

- A well-informed public that values the unique heritage of the AONB.
- People are connected intellectually, emotionally and/or spiritually with the area.
- 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.



Formal gardens,
West Malvern

The Malvern Hills area has long been valued for its wealth of opportunities for outdoor recreation and quiet enjoyment.

⁶². "Natural Choice – securing the value of nature" Defra (2011).

Each year, some 1.25 million visitors come to the AONB to enjoy its natural and cultural heritage.

Recreation and access

Background

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 heritage⁶³. Many of those are local people enjoying their leisure time. Initiatives have been launched by government and many other organisations to encourage healthy lifestyles and an increase in physical activity including walking and cycling. The government's Obesity Strategy for England ('Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives'), for example, includes a 'Walking into Health' campaign that aims to get a third of England walking at least 1,000 more steps daily. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 gives responsibility for health improvement to county councils. A key new duty for them will be to take appropriate steps to improve the health of their population⁶⁴. One way of achieving this will be to promote opportunities for exercise and this could lead to a higher level of outdoor activity.

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 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 as a result of this growth.

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.

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.

'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.

63. Malvern Hills AONB Visitor Survey 1999-2000, Heart of England Tourist Board 2000.

64. Public Health in Local Government: The new public health role of local authorities, The Department of Health (2012).

Special features

- Unspoiled 'natural' environment.
- Dramatic scenery and spectacular views.
- 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.
- 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 (RP5)

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 Conservators. These arrangements can lead to confusion over access rights in the transition zone between statutory rights of way and open access land. The legal position needs to be explained clearly.

Variable standards of path repair (RP3, RP4)

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, RP5, TRP6)

Mountain biking is popular on the Malvern Hills but there are no designated routes for use by mountain bikes. Open access rights on Malvern Hills Conservators' 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. This problem may be compounded by a policy of minimal signage on the open access land. The legal position needs to be explained clearly without generating multiple signs that impact on the open countryside.

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.



Tank Quarry steps,
North Malvern



Kite flying,
Worcestershire Beacon

Poor accessibility (RP2, RP3, RP6, TRP6)

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. Some easy access trails are in place to allow greater access for people with a wide range of physical abilities. However, there is more to be done to make access easier. Information about such routes could be made easier to access.

Managing recreational impact (RP1, TRP6)

Walking is one of the most popular activities on a leisure visit away from home (alongside seeing friends and eating and drinking out)⁶⁵. As the local population rises, there may be more people on the hills. Better data on levels of use and impacts is essential to help manage this change and to maintain the special features of the area. 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 pressures such as erosion on the hills themselves. 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.

Increasing traffic volume on quiet roads (RP1, TRP5, TR02, TRP1, IP4)

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 would 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.

65 GB Day Visitor Statistics 2011
published by VisitEngland 2012.

Open access rights on Malvern Hills Conservators' land do not extend to cyclists but cyclists do have rights to use designated bridleways on the Hills.



Mountain Biking event, Eastnor Deerpark

Car parking availability (RP1, TRP7)

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; places where visitors would 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 key areas of tranquillity.

Need for coordinated signage (RP4, TRP3, IP6)

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.



Snowboarder,
Malvern Hills

Aim

Everyone should be able to enjoy and explore the AONB in ways that respect the purposes of designation.

Objective

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.

Policies

- RP1** Pursue appropriate opportunities to spread recreational use to those areas which can sustain it and which will benefit from it, ensuring the provision of suitable infrastructure.
- RP2** Increase the range of organised activities through which people can learn about the AONB.
- RP3** Ensure a consistent approach to the development and delivery of access through Rights of Way management and Improvement Plans.
- RP4** Ensure that the rights of way network and associated infrastructure (signs, gates, etc) do not detract unnecessarily from the special qualities of the landscape.
- RP5** Promote a simple and clear message to recreational users about access rights and responsibilities.
- RP6** Establish a strategy and programme of action to realise the health benefits of the Malvern Hills AONB with the National Health Foundation Trusts and local surgeries.

Many of the AONB's small rural roads are used for walking, cycling and horse riding.

Information and interpretation

Background

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.

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 also encourage specific behaviour and ways of thinking.

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. 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.

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 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.



Recording sound files, Eastnor



Lime Kilns, Park Wood

Special Features

- Inspiring landscape.
- A rich natural and cultural narrative.
- A centre of technical innovation and expertise.
- An active tourism and technology group.
- Popular Tourist Information/Visitor Centres.

Key Issues

Strategic planning of interpretation (IP1, IP2)

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 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 have only a partial understanding of the AONB.

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 (IP5, IP7)

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 (IP6)

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. Obvious signs can be damaging to some special features and sites and should not be used. There are other ways to interpret them.

Impacts of lifestyle choices (IP3, IP7, LP8)

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 Britain⁶⁶. 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.



QR Code, British Camp

Community projects, press articles and projects with partners all help to raise the profile of the AONB among residents and visitors.

66. Vision 21 – The Malvern Hills Partnership Our Future Together: A sustainable community strategy for Malvern Hills District 2006-2021, Malvern Hills District Council, (2006).

More recently, the area has become a centre of hi-tech innovation with a growing expertise in the field of technology and tourism.



3D map at the Wyche Geocentre

Aim

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

Objective

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

Policies

- 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** Form partnerships with the technology and science sectors to develop innovative ways of accessing and using information.
- IP3** Promote and provide clear and simple information on alternative transport modes to the private car for accessing the countryside.
- IP4** Promote products and services that support the special qualities of the Malvern Hills.
- IP5** Raise awareness of 'being in the Malvern Hills' as a special place to encourage sustainable activity.
- IP6** Enhance local distinctiveness through the maintenance and restoration of appropriate signs and through sign removal where appropriate.
- IP7** Develop a Malvern Hills area education resource in conjunction with local schools and/or other interested parties.

Volunteering

Background

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 Act⁶⁷ 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 done⁶⁸.

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

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

- The Malvern Hills Conservators who run a Conservation Volunteer team to help manage over 1,200 hectares of land. The team comprises 85 registered volunteers who provide approximately 550 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.

There are other opportunities to be a volunteer in the AONB, for example, through the Parish Paths Warden and Tree Warden schemes or as a Health Walks Leader.

Volunteering can provide a way of developing people's interests, personal skills and social networks.

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

68. A plain English guide to the Localism Bill Department for Communities and Local Government, June 2011.



Beekeeping, Colwall



Landscape planning,
Colwall

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 Geoconservation Champions'.

Key Issues

Limited volunteer capacity (VP2, RP2)

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. Each new call for help can place an undue burden on the dedicated few and this can lead to volunteer fatigue and burnout.

In addition, volunteer effort can be quite narrowly focussed on certain geographical areas, such as a particular parish or the Malvern Hills Conservator's 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.



Earth Heritage volunteers, West Malvern

Lack of volunteer support (VP1, VP4)

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. The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme was launched in 2003 with the aim of setting a minimum standard for local councils. Good Councils are those that will work closely with voluntary and community groups and express local needs and wishes effectively.

Lack of work programming (VP3)

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 (VP2)

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. Many bodies in the area benefit from the time given by volunteers. Those who benefit should join to fund that support.

Diminishing cash support for voluntary initiatives (VP2)

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. For example, funding through the AONB Sustainability Development Fund has reduced by almost 50% in the space of four years.



Learning to make apple juice, Pershore

Aim

That people wish to give their time and effort to the AONB and make it a better place.

Objective

VO1 To increase significantly public support, commitment and participation in conserving and enhancing the AONB through volunteering.

Policies

VP1 Support effective voluntary activity, in all its shapes and forms, that helps deliver the AONB Management Plan.

VP2 Explore the potential to develop and support a coordinated volunteer network for the whole of the AONB.

VP3 Develop and support networks of volunteers able to assist in specialist activities.

VP4 Encourage Parish Councils to achieve high standards in working closely with voluntary and community groups and meeting local needs and aspirations.

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.

Implementation of the AONB management plan is intended to improve the condition of the AONB.

Introduction

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 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. New indicators may be adopted for monitoring purposes as and when improved data becomes available and to reflect changing priorities. 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.

Table 3 shows the core indicators that have been selected for condition monitoring⁶⁹.



Monitoring landscape change

69. This list is subject to amendment based on the availability of data. This may include the selection of additional indicators.

Table 3: Condition monitoring core indicators

Attribute	Indicator	Indicative of
Landscape	Fixed point photography.	Landscape change.
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.
Geodiversity	Number and condition of Local Geological Sites.	Quantity and quality of management of geological sites.
Biodiversity	Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.	Health of biodiversity and geodiversity 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.	Changes in perceived levels of tranquillity in the area.



Before and after removal of overhead power cables, St Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve

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 features.

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 Action Reporting System (BARS)

BARS is a web based information system to support the conservation community. It records actions to conserve and manage biodiversity.

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 (also 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

Environmental services (also called ecosystem services) are the processes by which the environment produces resources utilised by humans such as clean air, water, food and materials. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment gives four classes of service:

1. Supporting services: The services that are necessary for the production of all other environmental services including soil formation, photosynthesis, primary production, nutrient cycling and water cycling.
2. Provisioning services: The products obtained from nature, including food, fibre, fuel, genetic resources, biochemicals, natural medicines, pharmaceuticals, ornamental resources and fresh water;
3. Regulating services: The benefits obtained from the regulation of natural processes, including air quality regulation, climate regulation, water regulation, erosion regulation, water purification, disease regulation, pest regulation, pollination, natural hazard regulation;
4. Cultural services: The non-material benefits people obtain from nature through spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation and aesthetic experiences – thereby taking account of landscape values.

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 English Heritage.

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 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 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.

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 environmental 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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The following bodies provide financial support to the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership



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