



<b>Committee and Date</b> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership  22 June 2010
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<b>Item</b>  <b>3</b>
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## AONB PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY UPDATE

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### Summary

This paper presents a short summary of current activity and progress of the AONB Partnership's staff team.

### Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note and comment on the information provided on progress, and guide on how best to report this to Partnership members in future.

### Background

1. The Team's work programme is planned and reported on by Financial Year. The Management Board receives summary updates at each meeting, and Natural England are provided with the full team work programme and an end of year progress update on this. The summary provided here relates to the 2009-10 Financial Year (highlights from which will be published by September in the Annual Review, currently in preparation) and for the current Financial Year 2010-11. Some information is also sent to members in circular emails/ mailings and E-bulletins.
2. It is intended to provide Partnership members with an appropriate level of detail of information about activity, and views from members about how best to do this are welcome.

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
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Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Team Work Programme 2010-11, available on request.
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Update papers to Management Board 29 April 2010, available at
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<a href="http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/mgt_board_apr_10.htm">http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/mgt_board_apr_10.htm</a>
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<b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b>
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The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
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<b>Environmental Appraisal</b>
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The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
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<b>Risk Management Appraisal</b>
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Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
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**Community / Consultations Appraisal**

The tasks in the work programme summary are made publicly available on the web. Progress is reported regularly to the Management Board and funders, and publicly as appropriate.

**Appendices**

**Appendix 1 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 2009-10 Team Work Programme Summary End Of Year Progress Update**

**Appendix 2 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Team Work Programme 2010 -11 Overview & Progress at June 2010**

**Appendix 3 Sustainable Development Fund grants approved 2010-11 (at June 2010)**

**Appendix 1 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 2009-10 Team Work Programme  
Summary End Of Year Progress Update**

<b>Key areas of work</b>	<b>Key actions and outputs</b>
<b>Develop policy and strategy for the area through the AONB Management Plan, and influence the policies and strategies of others</b>	
<b>AONB Management Plan</b>	The <a href="#">Plan</a> was approved by Telford & Wrekin Council on 11 May 2009. Printed Plans distributed in June (c270 copies mailed), with good feedback. Formal notifications to Defra, etc have been completed. The final <a href="#">Sustainability Appraisal Statement</a> was completed and published. This has resulted in a constructive response from the Countryside Council for Wales on ongoing cross-border working, and a meeting is planned.
<b>Planning</b>	<a href="#">Comments</a> made on the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 3 options and Shropshire Core Strategy Policy Directions. <a href="#">Comments</a> have been made on 10 planning applications (7 objections). Renewal of the AONB <a href="#">Planning Protocol</a> in progress with the local authorities.
<b>Other strategies</b>	<a href="#">Input</a> provided to Commission for Rural Communities Uplands Enquiry, Severn River Basin Management Plan, Shropshire Cultural Strategy, Shropshire Sustainable Community Strategy and Natural England draft Protected Landscapes policy.
<b>Local authorities and local strategic partnerships</b>	Good links established with new hosting department (Shropshire Council Development Services Directorate) - meeting with Portfolio Holder, links especially with Environment, Planning Policy and Economic Development. Input to training for new Community Regeneration Officers. Continued close links with Biodiversity Partnership and with Transport. Links with Telford & Wrekin Council through Management Plan and planning. Active input to Southern Shropshire Partnership and its Delivery Groups for Environment, Economy & Learning, Health & Wellbeing.
<b>Guidance &amp; strategy</b>	Input to <a href="#">Natural England-led climate change adaptation work</a> and Shropshire Council Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan.
<b>Take and co-ordinate action to conserve and enhance natural beauty, promote enjoyment, understanding and wellbeing and further sustainable development</b>	
<b>Support / advise projects</b>	An active role has been played in 51 project steering groups, working groups, partnerships or research initiatives. Support also given to a further 44 groups or projects led by others, including on landscape, conservation, farming, access, tourism and interpretation.
<b>Sustainable Development Fund</b>	Support and grants totalling £65,429 awarded to 23 <a href="#">projects</a> .
<b>LEADER</b>	<a href="#">Local Development Strategy and Business Plan</a> approved 7 May 09. Formal contract with Advantage West Midlands signed 17 Sept 09. Grants to 11 projects approved, totalling £425,589 (£40,132 paid to 4 projects). Strong input has been made to the West Midlands LEADER and RDPE networks, including development of W Mids LEADER Operating Handbook.
<b>'Buy Local'</b>	Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Scheme now at 78 members. Sustainability Toolkit and 'Sense of Place' material distributed to members. <a href="#">Commercial waste recycling study</a> completed with Keele University. Graduate work placement working on contact for membership renewal. Member champions active and 5 marketing training events held, plus 3 networking/ social events. <a href="http://www.shropshirehillsbuylocal">www.shropshirehillsbuylocal</a> website updated – features 159 businesses.
<b>Rivers Project</b>	60 farm visits undertaken for river management advice. Practical works undertaken at 9 sites and preparation further 10 sites. All landowners at River Clun SAC pearl mussel site will soon be in an environmental agreement. Led or contributed to 6 events, attended by total of over 125 people. Close involvement with national summit group on freshwater pearl mussel. Teme <a href="#">Rivers 'Water Friendly Farming' leaflet</a> published and distributed.

<b>Farmer engagement</b>	Report and <a href="#">case study</a> published on Spring 2009 pilot project. Phase 2 completed, with 21 further visits in Clee Hill area, and follow up contact with 35 from Phase 1.
<b>Offa's Country</b>	' <a href="#">English-Welsh Border Regeneration Strategy</a> ' produced by consultants, funded by AWM, Natural England and the Welsh Assembly Government and managed by the AONB Partnership on behalf of a wider group. The project was a major focus of the West Midlands Regional Assembly/ Welsh Assembly Government Cross-Border Working event held at Newtown on 2 April 09. Funding bids made for Offa's Country Sustainable Tourism project, jointly with Wye Valley & Clwydian Range AONBs and Brecon Beacons National Park.
<b>Woodlands Project</b>	Brian Barker appointed to Project Officer post, started 21 September. 20 woodland advice visits and 4 Management Plans completed (total 63 ha). 20 businesses visited and advice reports prepared through the Woodland Enterprise Grant scheme.
<b>Shropshire Hills Shuttles</b>	Overall 2009 passenger numbers were 8,123 (up 19% on 2008), but income was reduced due to changes on concessionary fares. 2010 service procured and publicised with new leaflet and updates to <a href="#">website</a> . 2 familiarisation events held for VIC staff and tourism businesses.
<b>Promotion</b>	The 2009 Shropshire Hills Events programme and visitor guide was reprinted due to demand, and widely distributed. The <a href="#">2010 Events &amp; Visitor Guide</a> was published in March (40,000 print run). 'Car-free walks' category added to <a href="#">Shropshire Walking website</a> . <a href="#">Blue Remembered Hills Bridleway</a> route fully publicised. 22 AONB-led events have been attended by a total of 445 people, and a further 11 AONB-supported events attended by 350 people. 26 <a href="#">press releases</a> and 2 <a href="#">E-bulletins</a> have been issued. <a href="#">2008-9 Annual Review</a> published, with increased distribution.
<b>New project development</b>	Proposal for a <a href="#">Stiperstones – Corndon HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme</a> . Steering group formed with further consultation events planned for 2010. Bid made for 'Natural Assets' funding for Sustainable Tourism Strategy. Proposed 'Discover Local' project based on wild and foraged foods.
<b>Business Advice clinics</b>	7 clinics hosted and organised at AONB Office for Business Link, Natural England and RDPE Rural Enterprise Grant advisers. 49 businesses seen (20 farm businesses and 29 other businesses)
<b>Support the operation of the AONB Partnership as an inclusive and effective organisation</b>	
<b>Partnership and sub-groups</b>	43 meetings have been held of 16 groups within the Partnership structure. 4 new Shropshire Council member representatives appointed. New <a href="#">Terms of Reference</a> refined and expected for Council approval May 2010. Membership review completed with 3 new Individual and 2 new organisation members, new Chair and 2 new Vice Chairs. Strong links maintained with the <a href="#">Wrekin Forest Partnership</a> (Chairing role), and core funding arranged for ongoing support.
<b>AONB Team</b>	Monthly Team meetings, annual team training day and staff appraisals held.
<b>Wider networks</b>	The Manager acts as Chair of the West Midlands Protected Landscapes Forum. Active exchange of best practice through National Association for AONBs.
<b>Support the involvement of the community in the management of the AONB (also a cross-cutting theme in some items above)</b>	
<b>Support for groups</b>	63 community projects or groups have been supported in total, of which 24 would not have happened without AONB support. 2 parish plan groups have been supported, with plan development or actions.
<b>Support for volunteering</b>	281 volunteers involved through AONB-led and supported activities. <a href="#">'Friends of the Shropshire Hills'</a> has 67 members (plus some renewals pending).

**Appendix 2 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Team Work Programme 2010 -11  
Overview & Progress**

<b>Key areas of work</b>	<b>Key actions and targets</b>	<b>Progress at 10 June 2010</b>
<b>Develop policy and strategy for the area through the AONB Management Plan, and influence the policies and strategies of others.</b>		
<b>AONB Management Plan</b>	Produce annual Update of Management Plan Actions with progress. Produce annual update on headline indicators of AONB condition.	Aim to complete for Partnership Oct 2010. Will require close liaison with key partners. Not all data is available annually. Aim for output by March.
<b>Planning</b>	Confirm consultation procedures and renew Planning Protocol. Comment on relevant LDF documents and planning applications. Provide training session on the AONB for planning officers and members.	In discussion, to complete following training session. Site Allocations & Management of Development current, comments on 1 application since April. Session organised for officers 21 July.
<b>Other strategies</b>	Provide input to at least 4 consultations.	None so far in 2010-11
<b>Local authorities and Partnerships</b>	Establish/maintain links with relevant departments of each local authority. Input to Shropshire Partnership & area structures.	Regular meetings with Environment and Economic Development, better links with TWC.  Ongoing input into evolving structures, esp. on environment
<b>Guidance &amp; strategy</b>	Develop work on sustainability, Low Carbon & climate change adaptation. Complete Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Continues as cross-cutting theme.  Natural Assets funding secured, brief for consultants drafted.
<b>Take and co-ordinate action to conserve and enhance natural beauty, to promote wellbeing, enjoyment and understanding and to further sustainable development.</b>		
<b>Support / advise projects</b>	Support at least 12 conservation/ economic projects. Support at least 3 promotion/ interpretation projects.	In addition to LEADER & SDF: - Wenlock Quarries - Interpretation at Cardingmill Valley - Sharing Our Shropshire, Church Stretton - Shropshire Farmers Market Marketing Project
<b>Sustainable Development Fund</b>	Give grants and support projects to fully allocate fund (c£47,500).	Grants totalling £41,863 offered.
<b>LEADER</b>	Award grants in line with Local Development Strategy and Business Plan. Support projects with delivery, grant admin, collaboration and publicity. Develop roles of the Local Action Group and participate in networks.	Nearly half of available grant funds are now allocated.  First projects are under way, making claims and gaining press coverage. Soil Association presenting to West Midlands LEADER network.

Key areas of work	Key actions and targets	Progress at 10 June 2010
'Buy Local'	Complete evaluation of Sustainable Business Scheme. Hold 4 events and maintain membership of at least 60 businesses. Maintain and promote <a href="http://www.shropshirehills-buylocal.co.uk/">www.shropshirehills-buylocal.co.uk/</a> directory.	Evaluation report completed.  Funding secured for development under 'Discover Local' project, including graduate post. Application for match funding being made to HLF
Rivers Project	Develop a Catchment Management Plan for the River Clun catchment. Undertake farm advice visits and co-ordinate habitat management works. Lead/ input to 3 events to raise awareness of Freshwater Pearl Mussel.	} } Work under way, in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency. }
Woodlands Project	Assess 30 woodland sites, bring 15 sites into management. Support 2 business opportunities. Facilitate Woodland Forum.	Woodlands Project progressing well with strong partner support.
Shropshire Hills Shuttles	Manage 2010 Shropshire Hills Shuttles bus service, and plan for 2011.	2010 slightly reduced service under way, with a new route for the Secret Hills Shuttle. Income so far up on last year.
Promotion	12 talks to partner organisations, education or community groups. Publish 15 press releases, 4 E-bulletins, 2009-10 Annual Review. Prepare joint Shropshire Hills Events programme/ visitor guide for 2011.	} } Work in progress }  Work will need to start earlier than usual due to staffing.
Offa's Country	Implement 'Walking with Offa' joint project.	Natural Assets funding secured. Cross border LEADER Co-operation project development progressing well.
Stiperstones – Corndon	Complete community engagement/consultation events. Submit stage 1 HLF bid for proposed Landscape Partnership Scheme.	Events under way. Good levels of community support so far. Deadline moved back from Nov 2010 to Feb 2011.
Project development	Seek to continue/ develop farmer engagement work and business advice clinics.	LEADER and Lottery bids in preparation for dedicated AONB post. Discussions with partners.
<b>Develop the AONB Partnership as an inclusive and effective organisation.</b>		
AONB Partnership and sub-groups	Hold 20 meetings of 10 groups in the AONB Partnership structure. Complete approval of new Terms of Reference. Provide training/ briefing session for Partnership members.	In progress.  Awaiting confirmation from local authorities. Date to be set.
AONB Team	Hold monthly team meetings and at least one team training day.	
Wider networks	Provide Charing role for West Midlands Protected Landscapes Forum. Raise involvement with National Association for AONBs.	Meeting 29 June.  Conference July Kent. New Chief Exec developing government links.

Key areas of work	Key actions and targets	Progress at 10 June 2010
<b>Support the involvement of the community in the management of the AONB (also a cross-cutting theme in some items above).</b>		
<b>Support for groups</b>	Support 3 parish planning groups – with plans or actions arising. Support 25 community groups in total (includes SDF, LEADER, etc).	None so far this Financial Year.  Work under way.
<b>Support for volunteering</b>	Develop 'Friends of the Shropshire Hills' group, maintain 100 members. Involve 300 volunteers through AONB-led and supported activities.	Friends summer event at Catherton Common 27 June.

### Appendix 3 Sustainable Development Fund grants approved 2010-11 (at June 2010)

Name of Organisation	Name of project	Amount of grant
Janie Mitchell	Bury Ditches Living History	£2,149
Myriad Organics	Raising awareness of the importance of organic food production	£2,000
Shropshire Wildlife Trust	Wrekin Forest small mammals survey phase 2	£2,509
Clun Walking Group	Production of a book 'Favourite walks around Clun'	£1,200
Stretton Climate Care	Improving energy efficiency around Church Stretton	£1,000
Old Fekkah's Cider Ltd	Orchard Project	£3,000
Shropshire Wildlife Trust	Catherton Common - Phase II	£1,800
Clunbury Primary School	Iron Age Round House	£2,500
Clun Primary School	Outdoor eco-classroom and weather station	£5,000
Wellington LA21 Group	Five Towns Wrekin Trail - circular cycle tour	£4,000
Leo Smith Ornithological Surveys & Consultancy	Conservation of Threatened Birds in the AONB	£3,005
Black Mountain Chapel	Work on Black Mountain Chapel	£5,000
Institute of Organic Training & Advice	Clover Project	£2,000
Small Woods Association	Venture out in Lime Kiln Woods	£2,500
Shropshire Council - Acton Scott Historic Working Farm	Sustainable Farming - Past, Present, Future activity trail	£1,200
Meg Pybus and Gordon Dickins	Cook Book - John Osborne Entertains	£3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£41,863</b>