



Shropshire Council  
Legal and Democratic Services  
Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
Shrewsbury  
SY2 6ND

Date: Thursday, 10 March 2016

**Committee:  
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership**

**Date:** Tuesday, 22 March 2016  
**Time:** 9.30 am  
**Venue:** Shropshire Room, Craven Arms Community Centre, Newington Way,  
Craven Arms, Shropshire, SY7 9PS

You are requested to attend the above meeting.  
The Agenda is attached

Claire Porter  
Corporate Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

**Members of Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership**

James Williamson (Chairman)	Sarah Bury
George Chancellor (Vice Chairman)	Lee Chapman
Cecilia Motley (Vice Chairman)	Veronica Cossons
Heather Kidd	Dave Cowell
Robert Tindall	Ian Dormor
David Turner	Carol Griffiths
Chris Turley	Alan Jones
Mr Andy Boddington	Sue Jones
Alison Caffyn	Jenny Joy
Mr John Pritchard	Bill Klemperer
Mr Tom Whiteman	Sue Lee
Mr John Woolmer	Marc Liebrecht
Ms Hilary Claytonsmith	Hazel MacDowell
Janine Hayter	Mr David Mills
Yvonne Holyoak	Mr Andy Pugh
Mr Clive Leworthy	Ronald Repath
Steve Pennington	David C. Smith
Mr John Tucker	Leo Smith
Caroline Bedell	Ms Donna Tavenor
Gillian Binks	Michael Whithouse

Your Committee Officer is:

**Tim Ward** Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 257713

Email: [tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk)

# AGENDA

## **1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

To receive apologies for absence

## **2 Note of the last meeting (Pages 1 - 6)**

To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 17 November 2015 as a true record

## **3 AONB Partnership Activity Update (Pages 7 - 14)**

This paper provides members with a summary update of recent activity of the AONB Partnership staff team, along with a summary of the team work programme and budget for 2016-17.

## **4 AONB Partnership Communications Strategy (Pages 15 - 30)**

This paper presents to members an updated Communications Strategy for the AONB Partnership

## **5 Stepping Stones Project**

To receive a presentation on the “Stepping Stones Project” – a landscape scale conservation initiative for the Long Mynd – Stiperstones area

## **6 Proposed Landscape Partnership Scheme for the Wrekin Area**

To receive a presentation on the proposed landscape partnership scheme for the Wrekin area

## **7 Dates of future meetings**

Members are advised that future meetings will be held on: -

Tuesday 14 June 2016 (followed by Annual Tour)

Tuesday 15 November 2016

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**Committee and Date**  
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership  
  
22 March 2016, 9.30 am

**Item**

**2**

**MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP MEETING HELD ON 17  
NOVEMBER 2015  
9.30 - 11.50 AM**

**Responsible Officer:** Tim Ward  
Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257713

**Local Authorities**

Shropshire Council

Cllr Heather Kidd  
Cllr David Turner

Telford & Wrekin Council

Cllr Chris Turley

**Statutory/Voluntary Agencies & Individual members**

Individual member	Andy Boddington
Individual member	Alison Caffyn
Individual member	George Chancellor (Chair)
Individual member	John Pritchard
Individual member	James Williamson (Vice-Chair)
Individual member	John Woolmer
Town & Parish Council representative	Hilary Claytonsmith
Town & Parish Council representative	Clive Leworthy
Town & Parish Council representative	John Tucker
British Horse Society	Ronald Repath
Country Land & Business Association (CLA)	Caroline Bedell
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	Sarah Bury
Caring for God's Acre	Gillian Binks
Forestry Commission	Donna Tavernor
Longmynd & District Bridleways Association	Sue Lee
National Farmers Union	Carol Griffiths
Natural England	Hazel MacDowell
Ramblers Association	Sue Jones
SASTAK	David Mills
Strettons Civic Society	Ian Dormor
Shropshire Wildlife Trust	Veronica Cossons
Upper Onny Wildlife Group/ Shropshire Ornithological Society	Leo Smith
Walford & North Shropshire College	Phil Ridley

**Observers/Officers**

Shropshire Council

Deb Hughes (Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships Manager)  
Tim Ward (Committee Officer)

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership staff  
team

Alison Jones (Clun Catchment Officer)  
Phil Holden (AONB Partnership Manager)

## 1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed new members Andy Boddington, John Pritchard, John Woolmer, Clive Leworthy and John Tucker to their first meeting of the Partnership. He advised that Councillor Robert Tindall had replaced Councillor Tim Barker as one of the Shropshire Council representatives on the Partnership and paid tribute to the role that Councillor Barker had played during his time on the Partnership.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Lee Chapman (Shropshire Hills Tourism), Cllr Cecilia Motley (Shropshire Council), David C Smith (Shropshire Geological Society), Cllr Robert Tindall (Shropshire Council) and Tom Whiteman (Individual member).

## 2 Minutes of the last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015 had been circulated.
- 2.2 **Resolved:** -  
That the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

## 3 Proposed Amendments to the Terms of Reference

- 3.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which set out proposed changes to the Partnership's Terms of Reference.
- 3.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised Members that following the loss of the LEADER programme, the Partnership's Terms of Reference required updating, and that in addition to the removal of the content relating to LEADER, the following amendments were being proposed: -
  - Increasing the number of Town and Parish Council seats from 3 to 6
  - Increasing the term of the Chair, Vice Chair and elected Management Board seats from 1 year to 2 years.In addition a new section on the role of the host authority, which had previously been in the DEFRA Memorandum of Understanding, had been added.
- 3.3 Several members welcomed the proposal to increase the number of Parish Council representatives but commented that it was important to ensure good geographical spread of the representatives. Mrs Kidd commented that improved engagement with Parish Councils by the Partnership would be a good thing.
- 3.4 Mr Smith commented that during the re-appointment of membership of the Partnership it was important to get a good balance of interests represented.
- 3.5 Mrs Claytonsmith pointed out that there was still a reference to LEADER in paragraph 5.4. The AONB Partnership Manager thanked her and said that this would be deleted.
- 3.6 **Resolved:**  
That the Partnership approves the changes and endorses the updated Terms of Reference.

#### **4 Election of Chair, Vice Chairs and Seats to the Management Board**

**4.1 Resolved: -**

That Mr James Williamson be elected Chair of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership.

4.2 Mr Williamson took the chair and paid tribute to the vast amount of work that Mr Chancellor had done during his time as Chair of the AONB Partnership.

**4.3 Resolved: -**

That Councillor Cecilia Motley and Mr George Chancellor be elected Vice Chairs of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership.

4.4 The AONB Partnership Manager reminded Members that in addition to the Chair and Vice Chairs, Councillor Turley representing Telford & Wrekin Council, and the two Council lead officers, there were a further six elected seats available on the Management Board.

**4.5 Resolved: -**

That Mrs Bedell, Mr Chapman, Lady Cossons, Councillor Mrs Kidd, Mr Pritchard and Councillor Turner be elected to the Management Board.

#### **5 AONB Partnership Activity Update**

5.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which gave an update on work being carried out by the AONB Partnership staff team.

5.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that the transfer of the LEADER Programme to Shropshire Council's Outdoor Partnerships Team had been completed, and that Pete Banford had transferred to that team. He added that he and the Chair had provided support and advice with the transfer where needed. He informed members that following a commitment to make good the income lost from the transfer of LEADER, Shropshire Council had agreed to contribute to the rental and service costs of the new offices. Mr Chancellor confirmed that he was representing the AONB Partnership on the Local Action Group (LAG) and that he had recently attended the first meeting and undertook to give regular updates to the Partnership.

5.3 The AONB Partnership Manager reminded members that the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme was half way through its five year duration, and advised that a mid-term review was being carried out by an external consultant. He gave an update on the work that was being carried out and advised that the contract for the provision of apprenticeships had been terminated. The training element of the scheme was being redesigned and would primarily be delivered in-house through a new part time post.

5.4 The AONB Partnership Manager advised that due to the ongoing squeeze on core funding, and the increasing difficulties in securing contributions to core running costs from projects, the 2015-16 budget was predicted to be slightly in deficit, and that all possible savings were being made. He added that the office move would reduce ongoing costs, but there were one off costs associated with the move. Any deficit would

be met from the reserve of earned income held from previous years. The Chairman commented that suggestions of ways of increasing earned income would be welcomed.

## 6 Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund

- 6.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which updated members on progress with moves to establish the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).
- 6.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that since the last Partnership meeting, a group of founding trustees comprising Anthony Morgan, George Chancellor, Sarah Bury and himself had been formed. They had held two meetings and had approved and adopted the draft constitution; the Trustees were in the process of opening a bank account and applying to the Charity Commission to register as a CIO.
- 6.3 The AONB Partnership Manager reminded the meeting that the CIO was not directly part of the AONB structure and needed to exist independently of it. However he added that the constitution contained some of the preferred links between the CIO and the AONB Partnership, including the ability for the Partnership to appoint up to three Trustees, and the AONB Partnership Manager as an *ex-officio* trustee, but that this was subject to approval by the Charity Commission.
- 6.4 Mr Smith queried the timescale for the creation of the CIO. The AONB Partnership Manager advised that it was hoped that the CIO would be in place in time for the next round of conservation grant to come from the Charity.
- 6.5 **Resolved:**
- That the Partnership notes the progress made to develop the CIO and the proposed links between the Partnership and the CIO.

## 7 River Clun Recovery Project

- 7.1 Members received a presentation from the Clun Catchment Officer on the work being carried out as part of the River Clun Recovery Project.
- 7.2 The Clun Catchment Officer reminded the meeting that the project had started in April 2015 and provided capital funding for schemes that would improve river habitats and water quality, and that the scheme offered attractive levels of funding and aimed to keep "red tape" to a minimum. She went on to outline some of the work that was being funded which included:
- riverbank tree planting and woodland creation which would help to decrease riverbank erosion,
  - work to exclude livestock from the rivers by installation of fencing and alternative water sources such as troughs, and
  - creating alternative river crossings and working with landowners to minimise the impact of land use on watercourses through run off management works.
- 7.3 The Clun Catchment Officer then outlined some of the work being carried out to create two 'recovery sites' on the River Clun, with a view to potential future translocation of freshwater pearl mussels from the threatened SAC site.



7.4 The Chair thanked the Clun Catchment Officer for her presentation.

## 8 Update on Tourism Work

8.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which provided them with an update on team activity on sustainable tourism, and changes to the organisation of tourism structures within the county.

8.2 The AONB Partnership Manager reminded members that the team's activity on tourism had increased over recent years and that the aim was to influence the patterns and impacts of tourism on the AONB. He then outlined the work that had been carried out over the past 5 years.

8.3 The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that Shropshire Council had recently reduced the number of Tourism Officers from two to one and had also changed the nature of their role, which had resulted in the withdrawal of administrative support for the Destination Development Partnership (DDP). He informed members that the AONB Partnership had taken over this role to ensure the continued momentum of the group. He then outlined other changes and areas of potential work.

8.4 Ms Jones asked about the future of the Shuttle buses. The AONB Partnership Manager informed her that sufficient funding was in place for 2016 to run the Long Mynd – Stiperstones service, although the contribution from Natural England had been lost.

### 8.5 Resolved:

That the information contained in the report be noted.

## 9 Proposed Uplands Commons Project

9.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which outlined the proposed national project on upland commons involving the Shropshire Hills AONB along with four English National Parks.

9.2 The AONB Partnership Manager informed members that the proposed project, co-ordinated by The Foundation for Common Land, would focus on enhancing the heritage of common land in five areas, Dartmoor, the Yorkshire Dales, the North York Moors, Cumbria and the Shropshire Hills. The project would aim to share experience and learning between the five areas through a programme of mentoring, skills sharing and promotion of best practice.

9.3 The AONB Partnership Manager advised that a national steering group had been formed to develop the project application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and that if successful, there would be a two year development stage and a three year delivery period. The aim would be to work with three commons in each area.

9.4 Several members welcomed the development of the project. In response to a query the AONB Partnership Manager confirmed that the National Trust was represented on the national steering group.

### 9.5 Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

**10 Dates of Next Meetings**

- 10.1 The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that he was currently looking at dates for future meetings and would advise them of the dates as soon as they were available.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date:



<b>Committee and Date</b> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership  22 March 2016
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<b>Item</b>  <b>3</b>
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## AONB PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY UPDATE

**Responsible Officer** Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager  
e-mail: [phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01588 674088 Fax 01588 674099

### Summary

This paper provides members with a summary update of recent activity of the AONB Partnership staff team, along with a summary of the team work programme and budget for 2016-17.

### Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information provided and offer comments.

### KEY AREAS OF RECENT PROGRESS IN 2015-16

<b>Take and co-ordinate action to conserve and enhance natural beauty, to promote enjoyment and understanding and to further sustainable development.</b>
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- **LEADER programme handover**

Following decisions made in June, the running of the Southern Shropshire LEADER programme has been handed over to Shropshire Council's Outdoor Partnerships team. A new Local Action Group (LAG) has been formed, and George Chancellor is representing the AONB Partnership on this. Grant applications are now being invited, and further details about the LEADER programme can now be found at <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/southern-shropshire-leader-programme/>.

- **Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme**

The LPS Board met on 16<sup>th</sup> December, receiving a presentation from Resources for Change on the initial findings of the mid-term review, and will meet again on 16<sup>th</sup> March. A team session on prioritising outputs for the remainder of the scheme has been held. The LPS Management Group also meets monthly.

Coal and transport. A development and repair grant offer for £108,000 has been received from Historic England for the 1784 Engine House at Pontesbury, and negotiations are in progress to get the contract signed by the landowners.

Lead & barytes mining. CBS Conservation have completed some restoration work at Snailbeach and Cothercott mine sites, and some further vegetation clearance has been carried out at Cothercott. Plans are being made for new interpretation at both sites.

Rescuing rocks & overgrown relics. Practical task days have been held over the winter at Earl's Hill, Poles Coppice and Nills Hill (mainly tree and scrub clearance) and at Snailbeach and The Bog (scrapes and vegetation management).

Volunteer survey work through 'Open hills, old ways and commons' is being fed into the Historic Environment Record, with professional support. Access improvements have been carried out at the entrance and parking area at Roundton NNR.

Hillforts & Castles. Ground stabilisation has been carried out at Castle Pulverbatch motte and bailey (parking area) and task days held here and at Callow hillfort.

A wildflower meadows talk was given on 22 November and a new contractor is being sought to run the machinery in 2016.

Buzz in the Borders workshops on pollinators and wildlife gardening have been held in Pulverbatch, Stiperstones and Chirbury.

Ground-nesting Bird Recovery Project. The Jean Jackson Charitable Trust has agreed an additional £36,000 for this project in 2016-18. Monitoring data for 2015 has been reported and a series of well attended feedback events held for farmers and the community. Unfortunately, curlew breeding success was very poor in 2015, with no young successfully fledged. Proposals for nest protection in 2016 have been developed and nest monitoring will begin again shortly.

The three Community Wildlife Groups in the area have reported their plant and bird surveys.

18 small grants for farming and smallholding have been completed to date.

Young people & heritage. The Young Rangers project is to be launched shortly.

Down to Earth projects are progressing in Hyssington/Church Stoke, Pontesford Hill and Snailbeach/Stiperstones.

Dynamic hills training. Jen Jones has been appointed to new part time Training Officer post.

Accessible records. Contracts have been let to Orangeleaf Systems and Shropshire Archives.

See <http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/> for further information.

- **Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund**

The 14 projects funded in 2015-16 are heading for completion by the end of March, and final claims are due mid-April. All projects on course to achieve expenditure and outputs. The Grant Award Panel visited the Arvon Centre and Brineddin Wood (Redlake Valley CBS) in October. An AONB talk evening for grant recipients was held on 6 October and well received. The Jean Jackson Trust have confirmed an annual contribution of £15,000 for the next three years, which is greatly appreciated. For further information and a summary of the projects funded in 2015-16, see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/conservation-fund/>

Project ideas and applications for 2016-17 have been received, and 14 projects are going to the Panel on 17<sup>th</sup> March, with £23k to distribute. Advice and support has been given to applicants and potential applicants, including a number of site visits.

A small group of trustees have come together over the last year to develop the Conservation Fund into a **charitable structure**, which will be able to raise money more effectively. Considerable work has been done on a constitution and structure, and the formal application to the Charity Commission for registration was submitted on 4 March (outcome expected within 8 weeks). If the constitution is approved as proposed, the AONB Partnership will be asked to nominate three further trustees. If any Partnership members are interested in potentially becoming a trustee of the charity, please contact Phil Holden.

- **River Clun Recovery Project**

Advisory visits have been made to 40 farms or holdings, where issues affecting the conservation status of the River Clun SAC (Special Area of Conservation) have been identified. These include sites adjacent to the SAC right up to the top of the catchment near Anchor, plus tributaries such as the Folly Brook and the River Unk. Engaged with landowners to secure 13 practical projects, with farmers signed up to work with the project, 10 of which are now close to completion, and several more are under development. Completion of detailed riparian surveys, Felling Licence applications, Main River and Ordinary Watercourse Consents. Engagement of local contractors for tree management, fencing, tree planting and track restoration work.

Working towards implementation of the Management Plans for the two potential Freshwater Pearl Mussel Recovery Sites; involving liaison with 7 landowners adjacent to Recovery Site 1 (Bush Farm), and 2 landowners adjacent to Recovery Site 2 (Lawn Farm). Working with the landowners and obtaining necessary statutory consents, practical habitat improvement work has begun at Lawn Farm, including tree coppicing, soft revetment and fencing.

Clun Catchment Officer (Alison Jones) has increased from 3 to 4 days/week following reorganisation of the project budget.

Highways runoff in the lower Clun Catchment – working with Environment Agency and Shropshire Highways Team to map sediment pathways to the river.

See <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/projects/rivers/> for further information.

- **Other Clun Catchment work**

Working with Woodland Trust, Land Life & Livelihoods and Severn Rivers Trust on a project to encourage woodland creation in upper Clun and Teme catchment.

Natural England are funding an additional Recovery Site Monitoring project with input from Plymouth University and West Country Rivers Trust.

The AONB Partnership leads the Clun Catchment Partnership, which met on 7 October and on 27 January, and will meet again on 20 April. Input also made to the Clun Freshwater Pearl Mussel Steering Group, Clun Field Officers Group, Teme Catchment Partnership and Severn Catchment workshop.

- **Shuttles**

The 2016 operating contract with Caradoc Coaches has been confirmed. The Shuttles will start 30 April and run until 2 October. Publicity material is being produced, and a number of businesses along the route are advertising in the leaflet this year. There will be a route diversion over summer holidays due to road works at Snailbeach lasting five weeks – amendments will be made to the timetable and disruption highlighted in the publicity material. See <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/enjoying-the-shropshire-hills/shuttles/>.

- **Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Network**

The network has been relaunched with a stronger focus on sustainable tourism, and two year membership, with bronze, silver and gold certificates to reflect the businesses' commitment over 6 years. All the businesses in the old scheme have been invited to join the new network. The 2016 series of networking events are being planned. For more information see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/enjoying-the-shropshire-hills/buy-local-be-sustainable/>.

- **Promotion activity.**

The winter **Newsletter** was sent through the new .govdelivery system. Spring newsletter prepared for sending mid March.

Further content additions and updating of the AONB **website** [www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk](http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk), as well as input into the new Outdoor Partnerships website [www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk](http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk) and the new [www.visitshropshirehills.co.uk](http://www.visitshropshirehills.co.uk) website.

Interview on Big Centre TV regional programme just before Christmas.

2016 **events** have been added to the website.

Article on Highway drains survey into parish newsletter and Shropshire Star.

**2014-15 Annual Review** published (delayed due to office move)

<http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Annual-Review-2014-15.pdf>.

- **Advice and support** to a range of activities and projects, including Memories of the Landscape (joint work with CPRE, Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, Clun Forest History Group and Newcastle School), HeARTland project (joint work with National Trust, Arts Alive & Ben Osborne), Upper Gravenor (developing the farm for educational and community benefit), Sophie Holt (local food project), Tru Wood (social forestry), Friends of Pontesford Hill, and Cleef Hill signage proposals. Support to Land Life & Livelihoods and Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group with their joint application to the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund. Working closely with Shropshire Wildlife Trust on Local Wildlife Sites with advice, contacts and funding. Provided help, advice and contacts to Severn Rivers Trust for their new 'Springs of Rivers' HLF project.

- **Wrekin Forest Partnership**

Meeting held 21 January. The new **Wrekin Forest Plan** is being used as evidence to support the new Telford & Wrekin Local Plan. Shropshire Wildlife Trust are now developing a Stage 1

**Landscape Partnership Scheme bid** to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Wrekin area.  
<http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/area-initiatives/wrekin-forest/>

- **Clee Hill Partnership**  
Meeting held 23 November, and will meet again on 21 March.

#### Project development

- Final input into HLF application by the Foundation for Common land for '**Our Common Cause**' – **Upland Commons project**, a national project with activity in the Shropshire Hills AONB and four other upland areas. First meeting held 20<sup>th</sup> January of a Shropshire Hills Area Group for project. Further one to one meetings carried out, including with Stiperstones Commoners. Funding application to HLF submitted early February, awaiting outcome.
- Involvement in 'Stepping Stones' feasibility work for a **landscape-scale conservation project focused on the Long Mynd and Stiperstones area**. Paid work by Community & Landscape Officer to run stakeholder consultation workshops.
- Further discussions with Woodland Trust, Small Woods Association and Woods for Wellbeing about the **proposed Social Forestry project**. Successful stakeholder meeting held in January - well received and good support for the project. The Small Woods Association has submitted a funding application to our Conservation Fund to develop the project further.

**Develop policy and strategy for the area through the AONB Management Plan, and influence the policies and strategies of others.**

- Text version of approved **AONB Management Plan 2014-19** available on website. Work is still in progress on a basic designed pdf with figures and some images.

- **Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan**

The **Shropshire Hills & Ludlow Destination Partnership** is being brought under the wing of Shropshire Hills Tourism as a 'Destination Management Organisation' recognised by Visit England. The AONB Partnership will continue to provide secretariat and lead for the Destination Partnership. <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/aonb-partnership/area-initiatives/shropshire-hills-and-ludlow-destination-development-partnership/>.

**Tourism Co-operation project** outline application submitted for EAFRD Growth Programme (EU) funding. £50k grant sought against £19k match for marketing, update of tourism strategy and Charter, and training for tourism/information providers. Partnership project overseen by the Destination Partnership, working with Shropshire Hills Tourism, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, town tourism groups and others.

'**Great Days in the Shropshire Hills**' leaflet produced with Shropshire Hills Tourism.

**Leaflet swap event** for tourism businesses organised with partners on 17 March.

Input to Telford Visitor Economy Forum, Southern Shropshire Walking Forum and various steering groups led by others.

- **Planning**. Submissions made on eleven planning applications –
  - Baron of Bucknell camping pods – 29.1.16
  - Wheathill Caravan Site, Wheathill – 13.11.15
  - Spring Cottage extension, Leighton – 12.10.15
  - Anaerobic Digester, Bitterley – 11.9.15
  - Proposed Development, Land North & East of Cwms Lane, Church Stretton – 18.8.15
  - Solar Farm, Henley, Acton Scott – Appeal – 23.7.15
  - Church Stretton Housing, Land east of Shrewsbury Road – 2.6.15
  - Springbank Employment Site, Church Stretton – 2.6.15

- Whitton Solar Farm, Caynham – 23.4.15
- Proposed dwelling NW of the Fishpools, Pontesford Hill – 23.4.15
- Newcastle Hall Barns, Newcastle, Craven Arms – 14.4.15
- Input to other **non-planning casework and strategies**, including EA River Basin Management Plans, response to EU Habitats and Birds Directives consultation, Ordinary Watercourse Consent consultations, Natural England Environmental Impact Assessment screening decision consultations.
- **Western Power undergrounding programme** – Works have been completed at Crossways (Rhos Fiddle) and Norbury village. Undergrounding work is also about to start at the viewpoint at Clee Hill on the A 4117. With new funding approved by Ofgem, further undergrounding schemes are being explored.
- **National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative**. This programme offers opportunities for enhancement projects close to National Grid's high voltage line across the south side of the Wrekin. It has not been launched yet, but this is expected soon.

**Develop the AONB Partnership as an inclusive and effective organisation.**

- Biennial review of **Partnership membership** completed, with 10 new members appointed, and new Chair and Vice Chairs. A briefing/induction session will be held on 22 March.
- The Partnership's annual **Tour** on 14 June will be based at Norbury Village Hall and will be themed to 'Landscape Scale Conservation'.
- Consolidation of **new office** base at Drovers House. Running arrangements, budgets, etc are being established. Installation of broadband with phone lines was completed late February.
- Input to **National Association for AONBs**, through annual conference, Chairmen's conference and AGM, Lead Officers meeting, and frequent information sharing and consultations. <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/>. The Shropshire Hills AONB will be one of the host areas for the 2016 Conference based at Lilleshall, and we are organising field trips to the Long Mynd and Clun catchment.
- Support and input to establishing the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund as a **charity**.

**Support the involvement of the community in the management of the AONB (also a cross-cutting theme in some items above).**

- Support and advice for a wide range of **community projects**.
- **John Muir Award** programme with schools (education/activity programme themed on wild places), Bucknell and Rushbury primary schools have successfully achieved the award following their visits, conservation work and sharing event. Hope to work with Kinlet and St George's Shrewsbury if funding secured. Organising Clun Forest field study trip for Ludlow College A level Geography students in March. Working with Shropshire Wildlife Trust on setting up Wildlife Watch groups in Shropshire Hills schools.
- **Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB** currently has 134 members. Andrew Wood is helping as a volunteer with member recruitment. The Friends annual social event for 2016 is being planned.
- David Tomkins is currently helping as a volunteer on the River Clun Recovery Project in a technical research role. Volunteer tree planting tasks are planned in the Clun Catchment for this winter.

**AONB TEAM WORK PROGRAMME 2016-17**

A summary of the team's work plan for 2016-17 is shown in Appendix 1.

## FINANCE SUMMARY

Due to improved levels of earned income, the 2015-16 budgets are currently expected to outturn more or less in balance, rather than in deficit as predicted in November. The office move will reduce ongoing costs slightly (after meeting one-off expenses associated with the move). The budget for 2016-17 as presented to Defra as part of our contribution bid, is shown in Appendix 2.

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19.
The full 2016-17 Team work programme can be made available to members on request.
<b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b>
The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
<b>Environmental Appraisal</b>
The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
<b>Risk Management Appraisal</b>
Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
<b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b>
The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
<b>Appendices</b>
Appendix 1 Shropshire Hills AONB Team Work Plan Summary 2016-17
Appendix 2 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Budget 2016-17



Key areas of work	Key actions and targets
<b>Take and co-ordinate action to conserve and enhance natural beauty; promote enjoyment and understanding, and further sustainable development.</b>	
Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund	Give grants and support projects with available funding. Support establishment of the Fund as a registered charity.
Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme	Deliver agreed outputs for year 4 of scheme (see <a href="http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/">http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/</a> )
Clun catchment	Continue four year <b>River Clun Recovery Project</b> (WREN funded) and deliver year 2 outputs: 2,000m riparian buffer strip created, 5 willows pollarded, 100m revetment, riverbed restoration, 1,000 trees planted, 1 livestock watering system installed, 200m track restored, 8 gateways surfaced, 4 sediment traps installed, 1 watercourse crossing. Continue to lead <b>Clun Catchment Partnership</b> and input to Teme Partnership and other Clun steering groups.
Sustainable Tourism	Support operation of the <b>Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership</b> . Update <b>Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy</b> . Renew <b>Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas</b> . Continue operation of <b>Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Network</b> . Organise networking events and streamline administration. Manage 2016 Long Mynd – Stiperstones <b>Shuttles</b> bus service.
Promotion	Continue to update websites and social media. Publish 15 press releases, 3 E-newsletters, Annual Review and joint Events guide. Give 12 talks.
'Our Common Cause' Upland Commons project	Support Foundation for Common Land with development of stage 2 bid (subject to HLF approval of Stage 1)
Support initiatives led by others	Support at least 15 conservation/ recreation/ promotion projects. Respond to requests for information.
Project development	With partners, pursue development of Stepping Stones project (Long Mynd – Stiperstones) and other opportunities as arising.
<b>Develop policy and strategy for the area through the AONB Management Plan, and influence the policies and strategies of others.</b>	
AONB Management Plan	Promote the approved AONB Management Plan 2014-19. Continue delivery priorities for the team and with key partners.
Planning	Comment on relevant LDF documents and planning applications. Maintain close links with local authority planning staff and members.
Other strategies & schemes	Provide strong input to new Wrekin Forest Plan. Provide input to at least 4 strategic consultations (non-planning). Comment on non-planning casework such as agri-environment schemes.
Local authorities and Partnerships	Maintain links with relevant departments of each local authority. Input to Local Nature Partnership and other groups.
Monitoring	Collate data as part of Management Plan monitoring framework.
Guidance & strategy	Develop guidance page(s) on AONB website. Progress development of AONB specific planning guidance. Input to development of Council Supplementary Planning Documents.
<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.
Local partnership working	Operate and support local partnership structures including Wrekin Forest, Clee Hill, Clun Catchment, Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme Board.
AONB Team	Hold monthly team meetings, complete performance reviews and training.
Business Planning	Continue to diversify sources of income.
National Association	Active involvement with NAAONB and other relevant networks.
<b>Support the involvement of the community in the management of the AONB (cross-cutting above).</b>	
Friends	Increase membership of Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB.
Support for groups	Support 30 community groups in total (includes through activities above).
Schools	4 schools involved with AONB related activity, including John Muir Award.
Volunteering	Involve 300 volunteers through AONB-led and supported activities.

## Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Budget 2016-17

<u>Expenditure</u>	2016-17	<u>Income</u>	2016-17
<b>Staff costs</b>	<b>£201,655</b>		
Salary	£158,597	Defra AONB Single Pot	£186,416
NI	£10,987	Shropshire Council	£40,830
Superannuation	£21,410	Telford & Wrekin Council	£2,694
Pension lump sum	£8,360	Earned income	£10,593
Travel & Subsistence	£1,350		
Training	£950		
<b>Office costs</b>	<b>£33,128</b>		
Rent & Services	£10,700		
Rates	£6,100		
Waste & cleaning	£860		
Office equipment & maintenance	£700		
Printing & stationery	£1,750		
Postage, telecommunications & broadband	£6,418		
Office vehicles	£6,600		
<b>Promotional Activity</b>	<b>£1,550</b>		
Events publicity	£200		
Website development	£300		
Annual Review	£350		
Other promotion	£500		
Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB	£200		
<b>Meeting and Partnership costs</b>	<b>£4,200</b>		
AONB Partnership and sub-groups	£1,200		
Subscriptions (NAAONB and international groups)	£3,000		
<b>sub total</b>	<b>£240,533</b>		<b>£240,533</b>
<b>RIVERS</b>		<b>RIVERS</b>	
Staff costs (inclusive of NI, pension, training, T&S)	£18,727	WREN Biodiversity Action Fund	£59,090
Office costs and management	£4,452	Woodland Trust	£10,000
Habitat restoration	£46,500	Volunteer activity (in kind)	£2,750
Training & volunteer support	£1,000	Landowner contributions (in kind)	£2,406
Woodland creation	£5,000	Natural England match activity (agri-environment)	£54,040
Volunteer activity (in kind)	£2,751	AONB Partnership cash match funding	£6,627
Landowner contributions (in kind)	£2,406		
Natural England match activity	£54,077		
<b>Total</b>	<b>£134,913</b>		<b>£134,913</b>
<b>SHUTTLES</b>		<b>SHUTTLES</b>	
Long Mynd & Stiperstones service operating costs	£19,740	Ticket Income	£2,800
Leaflet for next season	£1,100	Concessionary fare compensation	£6,000
Misc	£300	Shropshire Council contribution	£7,500
Management fee	£1,057	National Trust	£5,000
		Brought forward	£21,790
		Carried forward	-£20,893
<b>Total</b>	<b>£22,197</b>		<b>£22,197</b>
<b>SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK</b>		<b>SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK</b>	
Events and marketing	£500	Membership fees	£1,000
Management fee	£500		
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,000</b>		<b>£1,000</b>
<b>CORE TOTAL</b>	<b>£398,643</b>	<b>CORE TOTAL</b>	<b>£398,643</b>
<b>CONSERVATION FUND</b>		<b>CONSERVATION FUND</b>	
Grants	£23,000	Millichope Foundation	£5,000
		Friends of Shropshire Hills AONB	£3,000
		Jean Jackson Charitable Trust	£15,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£23,000</b>		<b>£23,000</b>
<b>STIPERSTONES &amp; CORNDON HILL COUNTRY LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME</b>			
Delivering conservation outcomes to natural heritage	£115,359	Heritage Lottery Fund	£468,903
Delivering conservation outcomes to built heritage	£121,222	Jean Jackson Trust	£20,000
Delivering community participation outcomes	£35,808	English Heritage - Management Plans/grants match activity	£94,799
Volunteer time	£10,000	Powys County Council	£5,000
Delivering access outcomes	£48,078	Shropshire Wildlife Trust	£5,000
Delivering learning outcomes	£172,768	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership	£5,000
Delivering training & skills outcomes	£56,770	Natural Resources Wales	£6,377
Overheads: Staff team	£137,056	WREN	£30,262
Overheads: Professional fees	£0	Arts funding (to be secured)	£57,000
Overheads: Scheme Office	£8,244	Private contributions	£7,000
Other Scheme costs & overheads (project equipment)	£4,037	Volunteer time in kind	£10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£709,341</b>		<b>£709,341</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,130,984</b>	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,130,984</b>



<b>Committee and Date</b> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership  22 March 2016	<b>Item</b>  <b>4</b>
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## COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

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### Summary

This paper presents to members an updated Communications Strategy for the AONB Partnership.

### Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to endorse the updated Communications Strategy.

### Background

The updated Strategy has been developed from an earlier one of 2010. The trend towards greater use of electronic communication and less printed material has continued, along with further declines in budgets available.

The Strategy proposes a more strategic focus for communications over the coming years, with an emphasis on securing ongoing funding and influencing key decision makers. These areas have arguably been given insufficient attention in recent years. Giving this area a greater focus will provide material which can also be used for more general, public-oriented awareness raising activity.

The Strategy does not contain all the detailed operational decisions for communications work in the coming years, but will be used by the team as a guiding document. It is hoped that it will also be useful to members of the Partnership to develop their role as advocates for the AONB. Comments would be welcome on what support members would appreciate with regard to developing this role.

<b>List of Background Papers</b> None
<b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b> The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
<b>Environmental Appraisal</b> The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
<b>Risk Management Appraisal</b> Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
<b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b> The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
<b>Appendices</b> AONB Partnership Communications Strategy, draft at 11 March 2016

# Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Communications Strategy

Draft at 11 March 2016



## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Summary of current promotional / communication activity
3. SWOT analysis of current situation
4. Relevant extracts from AONB Management Plan 2014-19
5. AONB Family Messages (from NAAONB Strategic Plan 2012-2015)
6. Agreed Values and Messages for tourism promotion, from the Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Destination Development Partnership Marketing Strategy
7. Priorities
8. Appendix 1 Structure of the AONB Partnership

## 1. Introduction

This Strategy updates one which has been in place since March 2010. Its purpose is to guide the activities of the AONB Partnership in communicating to raise awareness of both the AONB (the designated area) and the Partnership's work. The Strategy is not just about communicating the AONB Partnership as an organisation and its work. The related topics for communication that make up the AONB entity as a whole are as follows:

- The special qualities of the **Shropshire Hills** landscape (including biodiversity, heritage, etc)
- The **AONB** designation and how it works, issues affecting the landscape, and how the area can be looked after (by many different people and organisations)
- The **AONB Partnership** as an organisation and what it does (including Partnership structures and the staff team)

The AONB Partnership as an organisation exists only to support the AONB as designated area, but the Partnership has only existed since the 1990s, not nearly as long as the designation (1958), and holds in reality only a modest influence over the area. Therefore the Partnership is not simply 'the AONB', and it is sometimes necessary to be clear whether the designated area or the organisation is being referred to.

The Strategy may also be of use to partners, but other documents will be aimed more specifically at guiding how others communicate about the AONB.

Since the last Strategy was produced, developments in information and communications technology and how society uses it have continued rapidly, including:

- Developments in the use of mobile platforms such as smartphones and tablets
- Availability (or not) of Wi Fi, Broadband, 3G and 4G mobile networks
- Changes in the use of the internet and developments in social media, bespoke information and communication applications (apps)
- An emphasis on the availability of virtual information in place of print, and the immediacy or expectation that this should be available immediately and regularly updated
- Issues with rurality and the availability of the networks and signals on which this technology depends

In addition there have been changes in the AONB Partnership's working, management and communications environment. These include:

- Changes in staff structure, resources, partnerships and activities, including within Shropshire Council as the Partnership's host authority
- Co-ordination of national AONB promotion by the National Association of AONBs under the 'Landscapes for Life' branding
- Development of tourism structures with the AONB Partnership as a key stakeholder – the Shropshire Hills Destination Partnership (DDP) and its marketing strategy and branding, and websites and publications by Shropshire Hills Tourism and others
- The Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme operates as a sub-unit of the AONB Partnership team based from its own office in Chirbury. The Scheme has its own identity, which is not strongly linked to 'Shropshire Hills' partly as the Scheme area extends into Wales.
- Increased planning and development pressures on the AONB
- Development of cross-border working relationships as part of the Walking with Offa/Irresistible Offa project
- Greater strategic prominence to natural environment and biodiversity through the confirmation of AONBs as IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) Category V Protected Landscapes.

Considerable progress has been made with awareness raising over recent years. However the 2014-19 AONB Management Plan highlights that:

*"many people's connection with the landscape of the Shropshire Hills is strong, but awareness of the AONB designation and activity to manage the area is generally not so good."*

This Strategy aims to clarify:

- Who the AONB Partnership's audiences are and how we can best reach them
- What the AONB Partnership's key messages are
- What goals the AONB Partnership is aiming to achieve through communication
- What methods and media the AONB Partnership will employ to help us meet those goals
- How we will evaluate our success

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<sup>1</sup> Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19 p51

## 2. Summary of current promotional / communication activity

On-line/ electronic	Current format	Comment
Shropshire Hills AONB website <a href="http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk">www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk</a>	Content rich, multifaceted web portal, in easy to update WordPress template (cheap but has limitations in formatting available)	Main headings recently reorganised. Requires upgrade to be mobile friendly. Content requires regular refreshing.
Stiperstones and Corndon Landscape Partnership website <a href="http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk">www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk</a>	WordPress template	Scheme runs to April 2018
AONB E-News bulletin – aimed at 4 times/year	Quick review of activity and upcoming events. Now through .govdelivery newsletter system	Proposed to be every 2 monthly, more newsy and responsive
Facebook <a href="https://www.facebook.com/pages/Shropshire-Hills-Area-of-Outstanding-Natural-Beauty/103513872530">https://www.facebook.com/pages/Shropshire-Hills-Area-of-Outstanding-Natural-Beauty/103513872530</a>	Classified as 'Attraction/Things To Do'. A Facebook 'page' not a 'person'	1,181 likes. Regular posts with photos.
<a href="https://www.facebook.com/stiperstonesandcorndon/">https://www.facebook.com/stiperstonesandcorndon/</a>	LPS Facebook page	510 likes.
Twitter - @ShropsHillsAONB and @ShropSustainBiz (Buy Local Scheme)	Branded organisation Twitter accounts, well connected and interactive	2,341 followers 1,599 followers. Less often used
TripAdvisor listing <a href="http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g504098-d7364807-Reviews-Shropshire_Hills_Area_of_Outstanding_Natural_Beauty-Craven_Arms_Shropshire_Englan.html">http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g504098-d7364807-Reviews-Shropshire_Hills_Area_of_Outstanding_Natural_Beauty-Craven_Arms_Shropshire_Englan.html</a>	Tourism/visitor oriented, mostly user-generated review content	Set up by us in 2015. Currently 10 reviews and high ratings. Low input required.
Google listing <a href="http://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Shropshire+Hills/@52.470943,-2.9727197,11.05z/data=!4m2!3m1!1s0x48700d96693f476f0xac102fb6adae6e6c">www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Shropshire+Hills/@52.470943,-2.9727197,11.05z/data=!4m2!3m1!1s0x48700d96693f476f0xac102fb6adae6e6c</a>	Instigated by Google, we have 'claimed' the listing and improved info, with address and weblink. User reviews.	Currently 26 reviews and 4.9 out of 5 score. AONBs are now prominently shaded and labelled on Google maps, which is very widely used. This will be a very significant route to better general awareness of the AONB name and geography.
LinkedIn	Personal profiles and connections of a number of staff members help visibility of the AONB Partnership	Annual Review has previously been posted through this, reaching additional audiences

<u>Key on-line resources controlled by others</u>		
Shropshire Hills Tourism website <a href="http://www.visitshropshirehills.co.uk">www.visitshropshirehills.co.uk</a>	New website recently gone live. Visitor oriented.	Destination branding to add. Good input to editorial content
Shropshire's Great Outdoors <a href="http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk/">http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk/</a>	Relatively new, still being added to.	Build on cross-linkages
Wikipedia <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shropshire_Hills_AONB">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shropshire_Hills_AONB</a>	Reasonably accurate factual page	Updates can be submitted if necessary
Publications	Current format	Comment
AONB Management Plan 2014- 2019	Web-based print on demand (POD) document (text only at present, full pdf delayed)	Revised every 5 years
Annual Review	Web and POD document (previously printed)	Produced annually (2014-15 slipped)
General AONB leaflet	DL 6 panel leaflet	Limited remaining stock, dated
Great Days in the Shropshire Hills visitor guide 2016	A2 fold out	Produced with Shropshire Hills Tourism
Shropshire Hills Shuttles timetable leaflets	6 page DL, 14,000 cps	Produced annually, 2 page feedback form added for 2015
Teme Rivers Water Friendly Farming leaflet	A4 6 page full colour	Stock remaining. Specialist target audience but very good publication
Shropshire Hills 'souvenir' booklet	Glossy booklet	Gordon Dickins/ Keith Pybus (sold at £3.95/ copy), stock remaining, slightly dated but OK
Walking with Offa leaflets	6 page DL – full colour	High demand, limited stock remaining, no stock of most popular.
Walking with Offa walks booklet (1-18)	Wire bound A5 half Canadian, full colour booklet	Stock remaining, sold at (£2.95) Free to retailers

Clun Valley Walks (owned by Clun Walking Group)	Wire bound A5 full colour	Some stock remaining, possible reprint
Clun Catchment Septic Tank Leaflet	6 page DL	Stock remaining
Case Studies and numerous reports available electronically on website	On demand	
WREN Project briefing	A4 note to farmers	
Shropshire Hills & Ludlow Brand Guidelines	A4 briefing for tourism businesses	
Mobile displays	Current Format etc	Comments
2 x AONB pop-up mobile displays 4 x Shropshire Hills Shuttles pop-ups 1 x Buy Local pop-up 4 x 'local products' pop-ups 1 x Friends of the Shropshire Hills pop-up and flag	Standard 'Barracuda' style 1.8 x 1m pop-up roller banners Full colour	Produced 2007/8. Worn and slightly dated.  2 new Shuttles banners produced for 2015 season for use in VICs and Youth Hostels  Content becoming dated  New
Other means of communication		
Media / Press releases Articles into others' publications Office communication – telephone, emails, letters	Have been approx monthly in the past  Variable, on-line and print. Can be effective low cost method  'AONB Partnership' used, and AONB logo. Email footer has simple message & links to web/ social media	Activity reduced recently. Have tended to be focused on events. Need to broaden content No control, sometimes no input  Increased use of logo. Straplines could be more consistent



Office itself – signage, appearance, entrance lobby	Pop-ups placed inside window of new office	Scope for improved signage
AONB logo on office cars, stationery, clothing etc.	'AONB Partnership' used on clothing	
Stalls at Events / shows etc	Burwarton most regular, then Minsterley	Effective but very time consuming
Shuttles signs, posters, logo on bus	Large magnetic 'stickers' on buses. Logo links visibly to AONB logo	
Church Stretton & Pontesbury licensed use of the Shropshire Hills branding	Roadside signs	Good visibility, helps co-ordinated appearance to visitors
Roadside boundary signs on A488, A489, A458, A4169	3 Wooden signs, 2 metal signs	Visibility of wooden signage an issue No signs on A49
<b><u>Visitor Centres: (run by others)</u></b>		
Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre	Under new management by Grow Cook learn	
Carding Mill Valley (National Trust)	Panel in outdoor information area. Joint promotion of Shuttles and other initiatives	
Bog Visitor Centre	Displays. Promotes Shuttles and other print	

## Resources available:

### Staff

All staff play an important role in communications. Particular resources include:  
 Promotions Officer (Stephanie Hayes) 3 days/week, currently 1 day/week working for Landscape Partnership Scheme  
 Sustainable Business Officer (Nigel McDonald) Full time, focus on tourism, overview of communications  
 Administrator (Alison Scimia) Full time. Does most of website updating.

### Budget

Core budget for Promotions has come down from c£14,000 pa 2007-8 to around £2,500 pa 2015-16.

### 3. SWOT analysis of current situation

#### Strengths

- Strong partnership with high levels of engagement and support
- AONB Management Plan guiding activity for 2014-19
- Dedicated and experienced staff team with knowledge and understanding
- Established identity, and strong link to 'Shropshire Hills' tourism destination identity. Family of related logos including partners (Buy Local, Shuttles, Destination logo, Discovery Centre, Friends, etc)
- Effective, content-rich website, easy to update and develop
- Good quality publications over a period – Annual Review, events booklet, etc
- Some good mobile displays – flexible use, relatively cheap to replace and update
- New funding and funding led activity – grants, LPS – raising awareness through direct involvement and press & local media coverage.
- Project work providing direct contact with landowners (Rivers), and direct contact with visitors (Shuttles), John Muir Award (schools).
- Strong legacy and reputation from previous project work, including Blue Remembered Hills, Farming Project, Sustainable Development Fund
- Shropshire Hills now a destination to rival Ironbridge, Shrewsbury and Ludlow
- 2013 visitor survey provides good information about visitors and perceptions
- Local area partnerships – Wrekin Forest, Clee Hill, Clun, LPS

#### Weaknesses

- Limited and partial awareness and understanding of AONB – what it is, what it means, issues affecting it and how it is looked after
- Recognition of the area's 'natural beauty' sometimes overshadows its deeper natural and historic value. Can affect planning decisions (e.g. over focused on visual aspects)
- Engagement with key groups (e.g. farmers) not consistent across the area
- Complex organisational structure, 'hosting' arrangement with Council not well understood
- AONB has low profile or no profile at some key visitor sites and locations (e.g. Bury Ditches, Stiperstones, Bishop's Castle Town Hall, Ludlow)
- Distribution of publications is difficult to achieve without regular, sustained effort
- Low profile in Shrewsbury – important as county town, also low in Telford, Wolverhampton and Kidderminster
- Roadside boundary signs on A49 refused by Highways Agency, Shropshire Hills not signposted from the A5
- Style of roadside boundary signs is not consistent/distinctive
- Mixed understanding of the size and shape of the AONB and what is included within it
- Lack of good contacts with businesses as potential sponsors; Lack of tax efficient giving mechanisms

## Opportunities

- Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund, especially as a CIO
- Seek greater AONB recognition through Landscape Partnership Scheme activities, especially through site interpretation which will outlast project, and in Scheme legacy.
- Develop and integrate the AONB identity
- Simplify function and focus on AONB purposes following transfer of LEADER to SC
- Develop, plan and target social media output to raise awareness, virtual advocacy
- Improve use of electronic mailing lists and develop contacts database
- Strengthened staff team structure – core management group
- Cost effective print (fewer publications, bigger print runs) and timing of publications
- Make more of the NAAONB branding and partnership opportunities with the NAAONB
- Build involvement and active support for Partnership to develop partners as advocates for the AONB
- Potential for more general AONB talks to community/ specialist groups
- River Clun Recovery project
- Awareness of our role through planning responses
- Renewal of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism
- Make better use of volunteers as advocates for the AONB
- Developing partnerships and partnership funding
- Develop greater understanding of ecological functions of AONB, e.g. catchment management and flood attenuation

## Threats

- Profile from good printed publications becoming lost as these reduce (e.g. Annual Review, Management Plan). May have reduced too far?
- Risk of competing or confusing branding – LPS, Destination, Charity, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Wrekin (potentially) – poorly coordinated/managed communication
- Lack of IT connectivity limiting ability to keep up to date with technology and communications.
- Reluctance by some to distinguish the Shropshire Hills or the AONB
- Other organisations working to different geographical boundaries e.g. Shropshire wide or Southern Shropshire – important to retain identity of the 'Shropshire Hills' and key messages in terms of protected landscape
- Some Shropshire level promotion by others favours use of South Shropshire
- Limited budgets available and potential future funding cuts
- Organisational change and funding cuts at Shropshire Council
- Potentially unpopular actions – e.g. planning issues, wildlife and land management
- Public expectations sometimes unrealistic e.g. of Partnership's influence in planning
- Risk of disenchantment where people are rejected e.g. for grants or Partnership membership. Need to handle these situations sensitively.

## 4. Relevant extracts from AONB Management Plan 2014-19

### **Strategic Priority “Raising Awareness and Participation - Especially among Young People”**

Many people’s connection with the landscape of the Shropshire Hills is strong, but awareness of the AONB designation and activity to manage the area is generally not so good. Progress has definitely been made in recent years in raising the profile of the AONB and understanding of it. The challenge for the coming five years is to extend this awareness and understanding, and to help people to value the AONB for the benefits provided by its landscape.

Enjoyment of the AONB should be for all sections of society. Young people are however a particular priority in this Plan, as there are many factors contributing to a downward trend in their contact with nature and the outdoors. In addition to lost opportunities for enjoyment, development and wellbeing, this has been described as a ‘time bomb’ in terms of possible future attitudes to the natural environment and conservation.

#### **Awareness**

Improving understanding of the special qualities of the AONB is a key part of increasing support for conservation. At the same time, most people’s enjoyment will be enhanced by greater knowledge. Many people seem to have more confidence with heritage than in relation to wildlife or geology. Improving and broadening access to, and understanding of, local heritage and historic sites can therefore be a valuable springboard to a wider understanding of the landscape. There is also a need to continue opportunities to experience and learn about wildlife and geology, and much scope to raise awareness of both environmental issues and food and farming. Focusing on specific topics is worthwhile as the detailed knowledge of specialists and amateur enthusiasts can capture interest.

Awareness of the work of the AONB Partnership and its member organisations is also important. People who have had direct contact with the AONB Partnership and its work are generally much more positive and supportive than those who have not. Improving contact and knowledge is therefore an important means of increasing support.

Awareness raising needs to target decision makers as well as the public. The AONB needs to become a stronger part of Shropshire’s identity. The designation is commonly perceived to be just about visual amenity, and the contribution of the AONB’s high quality environment to the economy and wellbeing of the area and its surroundings, needs to be better acknowledged and promoted.

#### **Sense of Place and Community**

The hills and landscape of the AONB are central to most people’s attachment to the area. A clear identity for the area has not however historically been strong, perhaps due to its diversity and the variety of local authority areas. Local residents’ attachment tends to be focussed on their particular locality, or to Shropshire in general. Increased local working may help to translate this into support and action.

Along with raising awareness of the AONB itself, the Partnership has been promoting more consistent use of the ‘Shropshire Hills’ identity. This will help to strengthen the area’s sense of place, to support sustainable tourism by associating this with environmental quality and sensitivity, and ultimately to lead to more support for conservation of the AONB. The ‘Shropshire Hills’ identity has grown in prominence in recent years, but this does need continual reinforcement.

Communities are strengthened and their capacity and cohesion built by broadening participation in community activity. Community involvement and participation can be both motivated by and contribute to a sense of place. People's involvement through local projects such as those funded by the Sustainable Development Fund 106 and LEADER 107 has demonstrated this. The Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB 108 enables people to support and connect with the AONB, and has potential to develop a much larger membership.

**AONB Management Plan Policy for Tourism promotion (under Supporting Enjoyment and a Visitor Economy in Harmony with the AONB)**

Countryside attractions and walks should be linked where possible to settlements where services and public transport facilities exist and can be promoted, helping to maximise economic benefits, especially from day visitors.

Promotion of the area for tourism should aim to minimise car travel. Towns and locations best served by public transport should receive the main promotion as 'gateways' to the Shropshire Hills, in preference to locations where access is only possible by car.

Opportunities should be should be taken to strengthen the integrity and identity of the Shropshire Hills for its exceptional landscape value. Consistent use of the 'Shropshire Hills' identity should be given greater prominence in tourism and other forms of promotion, along with the special qualities of the AONB and opportunities for visitors to adopt a sustainable approach.

Opportunities and promotion aimed at both visitors and the local community should encourage people to experience the AONB's countryside more fully in more sustainable and less potentially damaging or disruptive ways.

## 5. AONB Family Messages (from NAAONB Strategic Plan 2012-2015)

### **Core Messages about AONBs:**

#### **1. People are passionate about Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and care deeply about their future.**

*Conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, ensuring they can meet the challenges of the future*

#### **2. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are some of the most beautiful and cherished landscapes in Britain. They require careful management, now and in the future.**

*Support the economic and social well-being of local communities in ways which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty*

#### **3. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are dynamic, living landscapes that underpin the economy and the health and wellbeing of society.**

*Promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and encourage people to take action for their conservation.*

#### **4. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are vibrant landscapes, they offer a wealth of opportunities for everyone to enjoy them and help in their conservation.**

*Value, sustain, and promote the benefits that the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being*

#### **5. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty deliver benefits for people and wildlife at a landscape scale.**

### **Core messages about AONB Partnerships:**

There are 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

**AONBs are nationally protected landscapes cared for by locally accountable partnerships that promote and support effective long term management to keep them special.**

AONB partnerships, with dedicated teams:

- **make things happen, translating vision and national policy into local action.**
- **engage with local communities and foster their skills, knowledge and energy.**
- **provide value for money by leveraging in additional funding, resources and project partners.**
- **use innovative approaches to deliver sound results through good practice and genuine collaboration.**
- **promote sustainable rural prosperity that conserves and enhances the natural environment for the benefit of society and the economy.**

## 6. Agreed Values and Messages for tourism promotion, from [the Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Destination Development Partnership Marketing Strategy](#)

Through a Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the area, and associated Marketing Strategy, a high priority has been agreed to strengthen the identity of the destination and its associated values.

### Values

Tourism promotion for the Shropshire Hills and Ludlow should convey:

- An authentic experience of a stunning landscape and exceptional historic towns,
- A reputed centre for local food and drink and environmentally conscious businesses.

### Messages

- The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its surrounds are a diverse area, based on its uniquely varied geology, with wild hills and gentle valleys.
- A range of different market towns all have their own character, and there are many pretty villages. Ludlow has a national reputation as a market town of outstanding character and for its food.
- There are fantastic views, tranquillity and dark skies, along with excellent opportunities for walking to suit all abilities, and for both challenging and relaxing activities.
- The area is unspoilt due to its 'off the beaten track' location on the English-Welsh border, but is nevertheless relatively accessible to many parts of England (and Wales), and well linked to transport networks, including public transport.
- There is a great richness of wildlife (particularly from the mix and transitions of upland and lowland) and of heritage and historic features (especially hillforts, Offa's Dyke, castles associated with the border location, mining relics and a great variety of traditional buildings).

*N.B. The wording of these messages is not necessarily intended to be used verbatim, but rather to inform and guide promotional text.*

## 7. Priorities

Priority communication area	Who	How
Demonstrating the <b>value of the work of the AONB Partnership</b> and Shropshire Council's role in supporting that, to encourage the <b>Council to continue funding</b> and hosting the Partnership team.	Cabinet members, other Councillors. Senior Council officers	Send 'So Much More Than the View' publication with letter. Invitation to Portfolio Holder(s) for guided visit about our work? Annual Review. Regular Comms meetings for relevant team members to focus priorities.
Contributing fully to the reporting and communication programmes of the <b>National Association for AONBs</b> , especially to <b>demonstrate to Defra the value of their funding</b> and its continuation.	Defra	Annual Review. Input to new NAAONB reporting indicators.
Demonstrating the <b>value to Shropshire of the AONB landscape and its active protection and management</b> , especially to secure better <b>planning</b> decisions.	Planning Officers and Committee members, developers, other planning consultees	Complete Management Plan pdf and State of AONB report. Briefing session with Planning Committee members and planning officers. Consultation responses to individual planning applications. Talks to public, community groups and Parish Councils. More content on special qualities and issues in social media output.
<b>Broadening and deepening the base of support</b> for the AONB and its management, and mobilising this through <b>fundraising and active support</b> .	All groups and people in AONB structure (400+), other partners and contacts, general public	Increase content from three areas above into general comms output – Enewsletter, social media, etc. Revitalise Annual Review. Improve co-ordination of direct email communication. Boost Friends membership. Establish visitor giving scheme. New AONB pop-up banners and improved office signage. Support voluntary roles and involvement. Developing better relationships with key businesses - as potential supporters and as a channel of information to their staff.
Providing <b>practical guidance to land managers</b> on managing the special qualities of the AONB landscape.	Land managers	Improve and add to web guidance page and promote its use. Project delivery, especially rivers, plus tie-in and legacy of LPS. Conservation Fund grant process.
Communicating to <b>tourism businesses</b> the special qualities of the AONB, the value of conserving the AONB's landscape and sustainable tourism approaches, and the benefits of co-ordination in tourism promotion.	Tourism businesses	Engagement through Destination Partnership and Shropshire Hills Tourism. Consultation over Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Charter renewal. Sustainable Business Network.



# Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership structure



Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country  
Landscape Partnership Scheme

HLF funded 5 year scheme, with the AONB Partnership as lead partner and Shropshire Council as accountable body



Governance structure for HLF project

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Programme Advisory Groups

LPS staff team

Sub-unit of AONB staff team



Formal 'Joint Advisory Committee' to the two local authorities and AONB governance body



Delegated sub-group of the AONB Partnership providing scrutiny and support role to team



Team funded by Defra, local authorities and project funders, working on behalf of the AONB Partnership, with Shropshire Council as accountable body



Grant scheme, proposed as CIO charitable structure, with representation from AONB Partnership, and support from team



Defra  
Core funder



Shropshire Council  
Host authority and core funder



Telford & Wrekin Council  
Core funder



Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Network  
Membership scheme run by AONB team



Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB  
Membership scheme administered by AONB Team, subscriptions supporting Conservation Fund



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