



Cabinet  
19<sup>th</sup> October 2016

## **Shropshire Hills Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a Business Case for a New Delivery Model**

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### **Summary**

This report sets out the business case for the future structure of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) organisation as an independent Conservation Board.

AONBs are formal legal designations enabled by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for the principal purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the designated area. This Act also gives local authorities, Shropshire Council and Telford Wrekin Council in this case, a power to take action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty in the AONB. The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory duty with regard to the preparation and publication of the AONB Management Plan on local authorities.

The Shropshire Hills AONB is largely within Shropshire Council's administrative area with a small area (0.6%) sitting within Telford & Wrekin Council's administrative area. The Shropshire Hills is a relatively large AONB, governed by a strong Partnership and supported by an active staff team. The context of continued structural change in local government and the broader working environment has led the AONB Partnership and the respective local authorities to recommend that the future interests of the AONB are now best served by the creation of a new independent AONB body.

It is considered that a modern, lean application of the 'Conservation Board' model enabled by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 will provide the strongest organisation possible for the long term future of the AONB. The new management structure will provide opportunities to tap into the capacity and skills of Board members, to work alongside the new Shropshire Hills AONB Trust charity, for enhanced commercial activity, to hold property and other assets, and above all the prospect of long term financial sustainability.

The creation of a Conservation Board is achieved through a Statutory Instrument laid before both Houses of Parliament. This process is led by Defra, who both make the final decision and provide the main AONB funding. Following the agreement of both Councils to the Business Case, the two Councils must write jointly to Defra to formally request them to initiate the creation of a Conservation Board.

## **Recommendations**

Cabinet are requested, subject to the satisfactory conclusion of all necessary due diligence work:

1. To support the proposal to create an independent Conservation Board as a new structure for the management of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
2. To delegate authority to the Director of Places and Enterprise to make a joint formal application with Telford & Wrekin Council through the AONB Partnership to Defra, requesting that Defra draft the Parliamentary Establishment Order required under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act (2000) to create a new Conservation Board.
3. To delegate authority to the Director of Places and Enterprise and Head of Finance, Governance & Assurance to progress practical, legal, Board composition, financial and other formalities in consultation with the respective Portfolio Holders.
4. To receive a further report, subsequent to Defra's informal consultation with stakeholders and all necessary due diligence work and formalities, with further reports as appropriate before the finalisation of the Legal Order confirming the creation of a Conservation Board.

## **REPORT**

The detailed Business Case in support of the creation of a Conservation Board for the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is included in **Appendix 1**.

The Business Case may be the subject of further amendments informed by Defra advice and as more information becomes available on the terms of the draft establishment order and operation of the AONB Board. If there are any material amendments to the business case further reports as appropriate can be brought back to Cabinet for members to consider.

Details of the AONB, its management plan, governance arrangements and work of the AONB Partnership can be viewed at: <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/>

### **1.0 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

The Conservation Board model is designed specifically for AONBs and is considered to have a number of potential advantages. It will:

- Be a relevant, progressive and locally determined model, supported by both Councils, as well as partner organisations and stakeholders within the AONB.
- Provide a strong, independent structure with an unequivocal focus on the AONB.
- Build on the existing strong engagement of partner organisations and individuals, and energise this through providing greater responsibility and autonomy, and therefore more reason for people to get involved on a voluntary basis.

- Be a simple, streamlined and efficient structure with a relatively small executive Board of 10-14 members. The appointments and administrative processes for this would be simple, while providing strong involvement of the two local authorities and an optimum size for decision making.
- Allow more opportunities for business planning in terms of fund-raising, project bids, trading and development of strategic work strands, due to undistracted organisational focus solely on the needs of the AONB.
- Raise the profile of the AONB and public perception of its importance, also with the benefits of being easier to understand, enhancing the ability to raise funds for the AONB and providing a stronger voice for its interests in decision making, especially planning.
- Work effectively alongside the recently established charity for the Shropshire Hills AONB, which has the main purpose of fundraising for the benefit of the AONB.
- Collaborate across the “AONB family” as an exemplar of good practice.

In bringing this together the AONB team and Partnership have recently developed a progressive **vision** for a new Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Board, as:

An independent partnership

- Involving and inspiring people
- Working for our special landscapes
- Enhancing their natural and cultural assets

Delivering better outcomes for the AONB

A thriving and progressive AONB will support local business, the visitor economy and community health and wellbeing, directly contributing to the Council’s mission “To be an excellent organisation working with partners to protect the vulnerable, create the conditions for economic growth, and support communities to be resilient” (Shropshire Council Corporate Plan 2016/2017).

A number of potential issues to the successful development and operation of new Conservation Board arrangements have been identified and these are described below.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation actions</b>
Defra rejects the Business Case and proposals to create a Conservation Board	Advice and input has been sought from Defra throughout the development of the business case. The proposals have been developed and endorsed by the AONB Partnership, a wide group of stakeholders established as the governance body for the AONB. In the event of Defra rejecting the request, alternative delivery models will be considered, including the establishment of an independent charity, and will be subject to the preparation of a fresh business case and approvals.
The Conservation Board is unable to manage	The full transfer of reserves earned over recent years by the AONB Partnership and currently held by Shropshire

<p>cash flow, provide match funding for new projects and manage unforeseen budgetary pressures</p>	<p>Council is proposed. The reserve is needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To bankroll cash flow as above</li> <li>• To cover potential redundancy liabilities</li> <li>• As a source of match funding for new project bids, which will remain a crucial part of the business model.</li> </ul> <p>A cash flow modelling exercise has been carried out for the first two years of AONB independence. A maximum temporary cash flow deficit of around £50k is forecast, which would need to be covered by working capital from the AONB reserves.</p>
<p>The Conservation Board folds with resulting potential financial and legal risks to local authorities</p>	<p>A business case, including a budget and cash flow projection for independence, has been developed and is included within Appendix 1. Contributions from Defra and the local authorities have been confirmed to the end of 2019/20 and this provides certainty over the majority of required income for the first two years of independence. The Conservation Board approach provides the opportunity to supplement Defra funding after the end of their four year funding commitment by providing greater flexibility to develop traded services, and to apply for grants and contracts.</p> <p>Although a financial contribution towards the Conservation Board by the Council is voluntary the Council needs to fulfil its ongoing responsibilities to the AONB and therefore it is expected that the Council will continue to contribute, although the amount could potentially alter.</p> <p>The forecast income and expenditure identifies a number of different scenarios with respect to the creation of a balanced budget, although in practice these are not mutually exclusive.</p> <p>The use of the substantial reserves built up in recent years have been identified to bank roll cash flow, cover potential redundancy and pension strain, and a source of match funding for new project bids.</p> <p>Ultimately the dissolution of the Conservation Board would be subject to a parliamentary process. As a legal body entirely independent of the Council, the Council would not have any legal responsibility for any potential liabilities.</p>
<p>Erosion of local authority “influence” on the preparation and delivery of the AONB Management plan</p>	<p>In pursuing its purposes, a Conservation Board is required to cooperate with constituent local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the AONB. Shropshire and Telford &amp; Wrekin Councils, under the terms of the establishment of the Board, will provide a minimum of 40% appointments to the Board. Furthermore, it is proposed that confirmation of new AONB Management Plans produced by the Board would</p>

	benefit from Cabinet endorsement. The Council will continue to have a general duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB when exercising or performing any functions affecting land in the AONB.
Loss of focus and reduced delivery capacity of AONB team during the estimated two-year transition period	Existing contract awards (currently held by Shropshire Council) will continue to be delivered and prioritised by the AONB team. A detailed transition plan will be developed with the full participation of all relevant Council services. An allowance has been made within the budget for some transition costs and potential external support, and an application is being made to the recently launched Heritage Lottery Fund's Resilient Heritage Fund.

In summary the Conservation Board is a legally robust established bespoke mechanism for the delivery of statutory AONB functions, notably the development and delivery of a Management Plan, outside the local authority. In the unlikely event of the Conservation Board being “wound up” statutory responsibilities will revert to the local authorities. It is noteworthy that any amendments to the Establishment Order will require Secretary of State approval; an Establishment Order will, therefore, need to be carefully considered before formal confirmation.

The proposals are not expected to have any negative implications with respect to the Councils' statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 and section 149 of the Public Sector Equality Duty. An Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment will be prepared as part of subsequent due diligence work.

## 2.0 Current legal obligations created by the AONB

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a formal legal designation enabled originally by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for the principal purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the designated area. This Act also gives local authorities, Shropshire Council and Telford Wrekin Council in this case, a power to take action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty in the AONB. AONBs are from the same legislative fold as National Parks and share some similarities, as well as differences in organisation and levels of funding.

The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 places in addition a statutory duty with regard to the AONB Management Plan on local authorities. S89(2) 2 of the Act states that “the relevant local authority in respect of an area of outstanding natural beauty shall... prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.” There is also a requirement to ‘act jointly’ in preparing the Management Plan, and the two local authorities for the Shropshire Hills AONB have formally agreed that the AONB Partnership would lead the preparation of the Management Plan on their behalf with the involvement of a range of local authority members and officers. On completion, the formal approval of the Management Plan is currently made by the local authorities themselves.

S85 of the Act also places on relevant authorities a general duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB when exercising or performing any functions affecting land in the AONB. “Relevant authorities” are any public bodies including local and statutory authorities, parish councils and statutory regulators.

### **3.0 Conservation Board status implications**

Conservation Boards are a structure specifically created for AONBs by sections of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

AONB Conservation Boards are legally incorporated bodies responsible for pursuing the purposes of the AONB, the production and overseeing delivery of the AONB Management Plan, and for employing staff and holding money directly. The main legal implication of the proposed new arrangements is that a Conservation Board, under detailed provisions in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, takes on fully the current responsibility of the two Councils to prepare and review an AONB Management Plan.

A Conservation Board, while retaining the main purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty, takes on a second statutory purpose to increase the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the AONB’s special qualities. In pursuing its purposes, a Board is also required to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of the AONB’s local communities. In so doing, a Board should co-operate with constituent local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the AONB.

Section 86(3) of the Act allows the Secretary of State where it is considered expedient to provide for the transfer of the functions of a local authority as it relates to the AONB to be delegated or shared with the AONB Conservation Board. The Establishment Orders for the two existing Conservation Boards included a range of powers from various countryside-related legislation to become ‘concurrent functions’, i.e. exercisable by the local authorities and by the Board. Detailed advice is being sought regarding these and it may be desirable to include some of them in the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Board Establishment Order, since this will need to cover potential long term scenarios.

Within the Conservation Board model the Councils would retain the legal duty applicable to all public bodies to ‘have regard to the purposes of AONBs in carrying out their functions’ (Section 85, Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000).

Defra guidance sets down categories for the membership of the Board – 40% from constituent local authorities, 20% from parish councils, and 40% appointed by the Secretary of State.

The creation of a Conservation Board is achieved through a Statutory Instrument laid before both Houses of Parliament. This process is led by Defra, who also provide the main AONB funding. Following agreement of both Councils to the Business Case, the two Councils must write jointly to Defra to formally request them to initiate the process for the creation of a Conservation Board.

The process for the creation of a Conservation Board is set out in Defra guidance of 2008 and requires informal and formal consultation, and this is mainly carried out at a national level (see section 8.0).

Guidance on the establishment and operation of Conservation Boards and on the responsibilities of their members can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-aonbs-conservation-boards-departmental-guidance>

Further information on legal considerations and the statutory process for the establishment of a Conservation Board including the requirements for both informal and formal consultation are set out in section 11 of the Business Case.

#### 4.0 Financial implications

Financial pressures led Shropshire Council in spring 2016 to seek a reduction in its net annual cash contribution to the AONB Partnership on the back of proposals to manage the AONB team within a new integrated Landscape, Health and Economy team within the wider Outdoor Partnerships service. Following a formal consultation with potentially affected staff and significant representations from the AONB Partnership and its members, agreement in principle was reached in April 2016 on an alternative proposal:

- To develop new independent delivery arrangements for the AONB team outside the Council within a new external organisational structure,
- To confirm a savings plan to the Council within the context of a review of the AONB budget both before and after externalisation.

Shropshire Council's support for the establishment of a Conservation Board has enabled £31,290 savings to be made to the Council in 2016/17. This is equivalent to the cost of the internal support services currently provided to the AONB by the Council\*. The net cash contribution to the AONB will rise upon AONB independence as shown below, but is still significantly lower than the current level. Therefore, a net ongoing base budget saving to the Council of £15,830 will be achieved between 2015/16 and 2018/19 through the Council's commitment to the establishment of a Conservation Board.

<b>Shropshire Council Cash Contribution to AONB</b>	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Shropshire Council Grant to AONB	£40,830	£40,830	£40,830	£25,000
AONB Contribution to Shropshire Council Support Services Costs		-£31,290	-£31,290	
<b>Net Shropshire Council Cash Contribution to AONB</b>	<b>£40,830</b>	<b>£9,540</b>	<b>£9,540</b>	<b>£25,000</b>

\*Shropshire Council provides £31,290 "non-controllable" support services to the AONB at present. Going forward it is likely that the Conservation Board will seek to procure these services from the external market. Although this will not result in a cash saving to the Council, part of the support services provided is made up of staff time (HR, Legal, Finance etc.) and this time will be able to be redirected towards the Council's remaining core services in the future.

A four-year budget and cash flow projection is included as Appendix 4 of the Business Case and described within section 10 of this report. The forecast income and expenditure budget assumes that externalisation will take place from 2018/19 onwards. Some key points are summarised below:

- Funding for the AONB team is received from Defra and the two local authorities, along with project funding and earned income from many sources.

- Defra, who provide the major funding, have committed funding within a four-year agreement to the end of 2019/20. Following the establishment of a Conservation Board funding from Defra will be received quarterly in advance in accordance with Defra protocol.
- The Shropshire Council contribution has been confirmed at its current levels during the transition period, dropping to £25,000 pa following the establishment of the Conservation Board. Telford & Wrekin Council have confirmed their funding support at the current level.
- The AONB Partnership will pay the full costs of the Council's support services during the two transition years; beyond this it is envisaged that the Conservation Board model will be to purchase support costs at a reduced price.
- The Conservation Board will be a 'Scheduled Body' providing full access to the Local Government Pension Scheme both to existing employees and to future employees. A 19.9% employers' contribution has been assumed, although this will be subject to an actuarial assessment.
- Ongoing accommodation and associated rental and property payments to the Council with respect to Drovers House are identified. However, it should be noted that consequent to a previous agreement made by the Council these costs are currently partially offset by the Council on a declining sliding scale.
- One off costs in support of the establishment of the Board have been identified and are included within expenditure projections.

The use of the substantial reserves built up in recent years is critical to bank roll cash flow, cover potential redundancy and pension strain, and as a source of match funding for new project bids.

The AONB budget currently projects a deficit for both the transition years and post externalisation. However, based on successful work by the AONB team in recent years, three options for managing this are proposed: (a) Further income generation; (b) fee earning income and the development of new income generating projects; and (c) a reduction in the staffing compliment to match available income. In practice these approaches are not mutually exclusive.

## **5.0 Staffing implications**

The team currently comprises 13 staff (10.6FTE), with 7 (6.4 FTE) based at Craven Arms, and 6 (4.2 FTE) based at Chirbury in a semi-independent team for the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme (HLF funded to March 2018).

Under the proposed new arrangements, the employees of the AONB team, and their terms and conditions and pensions, will transfer to the new Conservation Board structure.

The Stiperstones and Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme will terminate at or before the new body comes into operation, so there is unlikely to be any requirement to novate this contract or to transfer these staff.

Staff are fully aware of the proposal to create a Conservation Board and have been involved in discussion of options and the development of the proposal. Formal TUPE consultations with staff will follow once detailed proposals are confirmed.



## **6.0 Assets**

It is anticipated that the Council will transfer minimal physical assets to the Conservation Board, limited to:

- Office furnishings and related equipment
- Display equipment
- Tools
- Laptops and related computer equipment

A detailed inventory will be prepared prior to transfer.

Intellectual property rights in the AONB logos will also be transferred to the Conservation Board, along with all digital data and paper files relating to the AONB currently held by the AONB team.

Currently, and working on the basis of an April 2018 start date, only the WREN contract for the River Clun Recovery Project will require to be novated or transferred to the Conservation Board. Any new externally funded projects that are developed and confirmed in the transition period will also require to be novated or transferred to the Conservation Board.

As highlighted elsewhere it is proposed to transfer the service reserves that have been accrued by income earning activity of the AONB team to the Conservation Board in full. These currently stand at £177,174.

## **7.0 Accommodation**

The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership currently rents office space from Shropshire Council within Drovers House in Craven Arms. In addition to rented office space, Drovers House provides a number of retail units on the ground floor and a long term lease to the Shropshire Housing Group for a number of flats. Opportunities for the future transfer of all or some of Drovers House to the AONB organisation within the context of the development of a long term sustainable business model do not form part of the business case, but will be kept under review.

## **8.0 Background**

### **8.1 The Shropshire Hills AONB**

The AONB designation enhances the natural environment of the local authority, contributes to its overall attractiveness, supports the local business and visitor economy and support community health and wellbeing. The impact of a landscape scale designation like an AONB is considerably wider than the physical land which it covers in terms of visual and landscape impacts and benefits to local businesses, visitor economy and health and wellbeing.

### **8.2 Existing governance arrangements**

The current governance arrangement for the AONB is a 'Joint Advisory Committee' to Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils, known as the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, which is supported by the AONB Partnership team, hosted by Shropshire Council as the accountable body.

The Partnership has an independent Chair and representation from many organisations with remits relevant to the AONB, as well as Parish & Town Council

representatives, and individual members. This broad engagement is key to successful delivery.

### **8.3 Shropshire Hills AONB Trust**

In July 2016 following several years of research and development work, a new Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) for the AONB, the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust, was registered with the Charity Commission. This has a majority of trustees appointed from outside the AONB Partnership and is independent of the Partnership in governance terms. Its charitable objects however relate entirely to AONB purposes, and it is intended to provide a complementary structure to the main AONB governance organisation, as an effective mechanism for fundraising to benefit the AONB. It is expected to give grants directly to projects in the community, and will work collaboratively with the AONB Partnership (or Conservation Board in due course), which it may also benefit financially according to the trustees' discretion and its charitable objects.

### **8.4 The AONB Management Plan**

The AONB Management Plan is a statutory document which the local authorities are required to produce jointly, and aims to influence and guide organisations and individuals on a wide range of topics. The Management Plan is reviewed every five years, and the Management Plan for 2014-19 was approved in February and March 2014 by Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council. The Management Plan has the following key delivery priorities for 2014-19:

- Joining up the conservation effort
- Valuing the AONB in planning and decisions
- Supporting a sustainable land management economy
- Supporting enjoyment and a visitor economy in harmony with the AONB
- Raising awareness and participation, especially among young people
- Local working with communities.

### **8.5 Options Appraisal**

An options appraisal was first carried out in 2012, following earlier work by the AONB Partnership in 2010. This formed the basis of detailed options papers taken to the AONB Partnership and its Management Board in the spring of 2016. The options considered in detail were:

1. Retain hosting arrangement but develop linked structures to optimise broader sources of income including charitable, other grants, and trading
2. An independent body for the AONB using a 'generic' model in the form of a Trust, charity or company
3. AONB Conservation Board
4. Transfer hosting arrangement to a different organisation

A summary appraisal of the pros and cons in support of each of these options is provided within Appendix 2 of the Business Case (**appendix 1**).

This work concluded that a **Conservation Board** was the preferred model. Subsequently the AONB Partnership Board at its meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016 endorsed the Conservation Board as the preferred model for an independent structure, and supported a formal request to Defra by the two Councils and the AONB Partnership to initiate the process of creating a Conservation Board for the Shropshire Hills AONB.

The relative strengths and weaknesses of the Conservation Board model are summarised within the SWOT analysis below:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory status of AONB designation and Conservation Board</li> <li>• Part of a strong national AONB family through the National Association for AONBs</li> <li>• Strong local support for an independent body solely focussed on the needs of the AONB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation Boards pay VAT on some expenditure</li> <li>• Inability to reclaim 'full cost recovery' from some project funders (as with local authorities)</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tapping into the capacity and skills of Board members</li> <li>• Working alongside the new Shropshire Hills AONB Trust charity (CIO)</li> <li>• Potential for enhanced commercial activity</li> <li>• Ability to survive at a range of scales of operation, depending on levels of funding</li> <li>• Possibility of holding property as an asset, e.g. offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process to create Conservation Board dependent on Defra agreement and capacity</li> <li>• Need to manage cash flow and reserves effectively</li> </ul>

There are currently two AONB Conservation Boards, in the Cotswolds and the Chilterns, both established in 2004. Both are large and administratively complex, mainly due to a large number of local authorities (15 and 13 respectively). Although these models are a useful guide it is anticipated that the Shropshire Hills AONB could manage a significantly smaller more stream lined structure.

An independent charity may be another possible structure but is more difficult in relation to arrangements for the statutory duty of the local authorities for the AONB Management Plan. The option of an alternative host body is not ruled out altogether, but is not preferred at this stage.

## 9.0 Consultation and engagement

The scoping work on the consideration of different options, the confirmation of the preferred approach and the development of a new vision for the Conservation Board has been carried out by the broad membership of the AONB Partnership and the AONB team.

Members for both Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Councils have contributed to discussions via the AONB Partnership group itself and the Management Board (now the Transition Board) and support the proposals.

Specific input from Defra, Natural England and the National Association of AONBs have also been obtained and will remain important to the successful implementation of the proposals.

The process for creating a Conservation Board as set out in Defra guidance of 2008 requires informal and formal consultation. The first consultation undertaken by Defra will be an informal consultation encompassing a wider range of stakeholders including Natural England, the constituent local authorities, parishes, and any

interested parties such as the National Farmers Union, the Country Land and Business Association, local wildlife trusts and relevant community groups, depending on circumstances. Following the informal consultation Defra will consider these responses and use them to decide whether to proceed with drafting an Establishment Order. Following consideration by Defra and before the establishment order is confirmed a formal consultation will be carried out with Natural England and both local authorities only.

Independent of the above and following approvals by the respective Councils the AONB Partnership plans to raise awareness of the proposals under the strap line “A better future for the Shropshire Hills...with your help” and to involve and engage with interested communities and individuals in planning the way ahead for the new body, its priorities and activities.

## 10.0 Next steps

Defra advises that because of the procedures for the establishment of a board the establishment process is likely to take at least 12-18 months from the request to the Secretary of State. In practice, and in the light of work generated by Brexit, this may take up to two years.

Key milestones and an indicative timescale are set out below:

13 Oct 2016	Business Case to Telford & Wrekin Council Cabinet
19 Oct 2016	Business Case to Shropshire Council Cabinet
Oct/Nov 2016	Stakeholder engagement by AONB Partnership
November 2016	Joint formal request by Councils with the AONB Partnership to Defra to initiate creation of Conservation Board
2017	Informal consultation and decision by Defra whether to proceed
2017/18	Drafting of legal order by Defra and formal consultation with local authorities and agencies
2017/18	Due Diligence, e.g. regarding staff, funding, etc.
2017	Report to Shropshire Council Cabinet on detailed proposals
2018	Establishment Order undergoes parliamentary process including passage through Houses of Commons and Lords
2018	Confirmation of Establishment Order by Secretary of State and appointments to Board (Defra)
2018	Establishment of banking and finance arrangements
2018 (to be confirmed)	‘Establishment Day’ of Conservation Board and ‘Operative Day’ for completion of all transfer arrangements

A Transition Board has been established to progress detailed work. This includes representatives of both Councils, as well as other members elected from the AONB Partnership, and up to three additional co-opted members.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**  
Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2014-19

**Cabinet Member:**

Cllr Stuart West, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Libraries and Culture

**Local Members:**

Lee Chapman  
Cecilia Motley  
Tudor Bebb  
Robert Tindall  
Roger Evans  
Richard Huffer  
Nigel Hartin  
Madge Shingleton  
David Evans  
Claire Wild  
David Turner  
Heather Kidd  
Jonny Keeley  
Tim Barker  
Gwilym Butler  
Andy Boddington

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership proposal for transferring out of Shropshire Council hosting and forming a 'Conservation Board, 'the Business Case'