



<b>Committee and Date</b> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership  23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2023	<b>Item</b>  <b>6</b>
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**ACCESS FOR ALL - BETTER ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICES IN THE AONB FOR UNDER-SERVED GROUPS**

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**Summary**

This paper introduces some action research currently under way to improve provision for and engagement with under-served groups in relation to the Shropshire Hills AONB. At a later stage this will include specific recommendations for the Partnership, team and partners.

**Recommendation**

Partnership members are recommended to contribute to the discussion on this topic and offer perspectives, experience and comments.

**Background**

Kate Garner, a freelance consultant will lead discussion at the meeting.

<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> Appendix 1 Interim report from Kate Garner



## **Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership meeting - 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023**

**Progress report** on the delivery of a brief for research and recommendations into improving engagement with under-served groups in the Shropshire Hills AONB

### **The brief**

To provide an understanding of under-served groups in relation to the Shropshire Hills AONB. Make recommendations for engagement with them and improving services and provision by a range of partner organisations.

### **Timeline**

The work will be completed by the end of March 2023 with the potential for some further activity in April 2023.

### **Background and context**

Following the national designated Landscapes Review in 2019 there is a greater emphasis on ensuring the benefits of designated landscapes are enjoyed by all sections of society, and of the need to plan proactively for this, given the known under-representation of certain groups and sections of society.

In 2023 the AONBs will be rebranded as National Landscapes and will continue the implementation of the recommendations made in the Landscapes Review. The name change is designed to create a more unified, coherent and up to date brand, which will underpin a more fundamental shift in how the results needed for nature and the communities served are delivered.

This piece of work will support Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and its partners to be well-placed to locally respond to these national changes.

There are a number of formally recognised Protected Characteristics groups whose specific needs public bodies have a duty to consider in the design and delivery of their services.

These are the groups known or believed to be under-served in their participation in what the AONB as a natural landscape offers:

- People with health conditions or disabilities
- Young people
- People from minority ethnic backgrounds
- People living on low incomes, without access to a car, who are socially excluded or rurally isolated.
- Elderly people
- People who face hard or soft barriers in participation because of religion, sexual orientation or other factors

### **Objectives and outputs of the brief**

- Provide a clear understanding of identified under-served groups in relation to the Shropshire Hills AONB



- Identify barriers and opportunities for greater involvement
- Identify case studies of good practice
- Develop and recommend strategies and potential actions for engagement by the AONB Partnership and partners.
- Create and deliver a written report, presentations and briefing sessions that will inform the AONB team, the Partnership and partners and the review of the AONB Management Plan.

#### **Activity undertaken to deliver the brief**

- Research to understand existing local and national activity and work that is tackling equity, diversity, inclusion in the outdoors.
- Research to understand the quantitative and qualitative data that enables the identification of underserved and marginalised communities.
- Conversations with the AONB team, the Partnership and other partner organisations working in the AONB.
- Conversations with the local leads for social prescribing and other programmes that are connecting people into the outdoors to improve their health and wellbeing.
- Identifying case studies of good practice elsewhere that can inspire local activity.
- Identification and creation of resources that will support confident and proactive communication and engagement.

Gathering local intelligence through talking to the representatives and members of the communities identified as being less likely to participate within the AONB and finding out more about participation, e.g. -

- How are local people and visitors using the AONB for enjoyment (or not)
- The experience of taking part in organised events (or not)
- The opportunity to volunteer for activity that protects the AONB or helps people enjoy the landscape and doing things within it.

#### **Initial thoughts through the work done so far**

The demographic data available shows that Shropshire is a relatively homogenous area. However, when a variety of protected characteristics and intersectionality are considered, our local populations are in fact more diverse than we realise.

One of the challenges facing the AONB Partnership as an organisation is that it is impossible for it to know everything that is going on within the AONB. It could be that the range of people coming to the area to be active and explore are more diverse than is currently known.

It's important for the AONB Partnership as an organisation to appreciate that it doesn't have to understand every community that wants to participate in the area in some way, but to work effectively in partnership with the people who do understand those communities.



**Proposed outcomes to be achieved as a result of the recommendations (to be confirmed in final report)**

- Greater understanding of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion and the hard and soft barriers experienced by different communities
- Confident, proactively inclusive decision making, actions and communications
- The Shropshire Hills AONB area is recognised as being welcoming and proactively inclusive place for all communities
- Greater and different involvement in existing programmes and projects - participation
- Greater and different involvement in existing programmes and projects - volunteering
- New outreach activities co-produced with the people they are designed for
- Improved diversity in the people and communities who engage with and contribute to the review of the Management Plan
- Greater diversity within the organisations and structures that inform and decide governance actions within the AONB Partnership
- Greater diversity within the workforce of the Shropshire Hills AONB team and partner organisations workforce.

It is recognised that the recommendations will need to be realistic and pragmatic so that they can be integrated into current or planned AONB Partnership activity by adapting work practices and involving new stakeholders. However, it may be necessary to consider seeking additional resources to effectively deliver some recommendations at the desired pace.

**Opportunities to share findings with other research activity**

Resources for Change is currently completing a Needs Assessment for the Stepping Stones programme to assess and inform it's work and future development. There are opportunities for engagement with some local groups to be held jointly, and it is hoped that the two pieces of research will complement and add value to each other.

**Next steps**

The final local conversations will take place and case studies of good practice identified. The recommendations and associated actions will be confirmed, and the final report written by the end of March 2023.

*Adventures in Communities*

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