



<b>Committee and Date</b> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership	<b>Item</b>
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19 October 2010	<b>5</b>
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## AONB PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY UPDATE

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### Summary

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

### Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note and comment on the information provided.

### Background

1. **Work Programme.** The Team's work programme is planned and reported on by Financial Year. Natural England are provided with the full team work programme and quarterly reports. A summary is provided at Appendix 1 of progress with the current Financial Year's work programme.
2. **LEADER.** The AONB Partnership as the LEADER Local Action Group has approved £647,811 of LEADER funding. A further £160,431 worth of grants will be considered by the Approvals Panel in early October. A summary of projects and financial breakdown are provided at Appendix 2. The projects that have been approved are now making claims. By working closely with the Accountable body, Shropshire Council, the standard of claims coming through is improving. The work carried out during the 'Project Engagement Visit' with each applicant is proving to be an essential part of the process and ensures that the applicant / project owners are aware of the claims process at an early stage. There is some concern regarding the programme's budget profile. Profile amendments have previously been submitted and formal requests have recently been made to address the lack of clarity between ourselves, Shropshire Council and Advantage West Midlands over which profile we are working to.
3. **Budgets.** In the current Financial Year, Natural England have asked AONB Partnerships to surrender 5% of their agreed grant, amounting in our case to £12,443. The opportunity has been taken to trim the budget by more than this amount, in order to reduce the requirements for AONB earned income in the single pot budget, allowing a small reserve to be carried forward. The savings have been achieved through not refilling vacancies from Ian Dormor's retirement and Stephanie Hayes' maternity leave, coupled with freezing most other expenditure at committed levels.
4. The Management Board on 9 September considered budget projections up to 2013-14, to aid forward planning in relation to spending cuts. This process will be updated as the effects for the AONB Partnership of the Comprehensive Spending Review on 20 October become clear, though the timescale for clarity about the effects through either

Natural England or the Councils is not known. Work has begun on a Business Plan for the Partnership focussing on income generation, looking at the resources and opportunities we have, alongside an ongoing clear consideration of what it is we want to do. Ideas are shaping towards looking at developing a charitable arm to the AONB Partnership structure, linked to Friends and perhaps supporting the Sustainable Development Fund, along with fee-earning/business activity, which might be through a distinct but linked identity. These voluntary and private sector areas of activity could act as 'stabilisers' on the publicly funded core.

**List of Background Papers**

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Team Work Programme 2010-11 and quarterly reports to Natural England, available on request.

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Team Work Programme 2010 -11 Overview

[http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/documents/Work\\_Plan\\_Overview2010-11.pdf](http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/documents/Work_Plan_Overview2010-11.pdf)

Management Board papers of 9 September 2010 (includes detailed project updates)

[http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/mgt\\_board\\_sep\\_10.htm](http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/partnership/mgt_board_sep_10.htm)

**Human Rights Act Appraisal**

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

**Environmental Appraisal**

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

**Risk Management Appraisal**

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

**Community / Consultations Appraisal**

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

**Appendices**

**Appendix 1 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Team Work Programme 2010 -11 Overview - Update at 8 Oct 2010**

**Appendix 2 Summary of approved LEADER projects and financial breakdown**

**Appendix 1 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Team Work Programme 2010 -11  
Overview & Progress**

<b>Key areas of work</b>	<b>Key actions and targets</b>
<b>Develop policy and strategy for the area through the AONB Management Plan, and influence the policies and strategies of others.</b>	
<b>AONB Management Plan</b>	Annual Update of Management Plan Actions prepared for October Partnership meeting and publication.
<b>Planning</b>	Work in progress with Shropshire Council to confirm consultation procedures and renew Planning Protocol. Response to Site Allocations & Management of Development DPD. Responses to 2 planning applications, plus pre-application discussions. AONB seminar provided for 21 Shropshire Council planning officers 21 July.
<b>Other strategies</b>	Responses to National Association for AONBs consultations on AONB sponsorship arrangements and AONB objectives, and Shropshire Council consultation on new tourism structures.
<b>Local authorities and Partnerships</b>	Regular links with Shropshire Council Environment, Planning, Economic Development, Transport, Community Working, Outdoor Recreation. Contact with Shropshire Council members. Contact with new officer and member reps at Telford & Wrekin Council. AONB Partnership acts as lead for Long Mynd – Stiperstones and Clun Catchment Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Areas. Invitation to Marches Local Enterprise Partnership Sustainability Group.
<b>Guidance &amp; strategy</b>	Funding secured for Sustainable Tourism Strategy, preparing for tender. Agricultural Buildings Design Guidance in design. Wrekin Forest Sustainable Transport & Access Study nearing completion.
<b>Take and co-ordinate action to conserve and enhance natural beauty, to promote wellbeing, enjoyment and understanding and to further sustainable development.</b>	
<b>Support / advise projects</b>	Includes: National Trust Wenlock Edge Quarries project, Central Networks undergrounding project, Shropshire Hills Tourism website and publication, Shropshire-wide Buy Local website and Farmers' Market promotion, Walking Festivals, Care Farming projects, Homegrown Skills project, Land Life and Livelihoods Community Catchment proposal, Youthful Landscapes Project, Stretton Flood Alleviation plan, Discovery Centre, Shropshire Hills & Severn Valley Discovery map, Panel for National Trust tea rooms, Pontesbury gateway sign.
<b>Sustainable Development Fund</b>	15 grants offered totalling £39,863. Projects supported with delivery, grant admin, collaboration and publicity.
<b>LEADER</b>	16 projects now approved (6 this Financial Year), totalling £647,811 of grants, attracting an additional £461,275 of match funding. Audit by Advantage West midlands completed satisfactorily. Projects supported with delivery, grant admin, collaboration and publicity.
<b>'Buy Local'</b>	82 members at 23 Sept. Evaluation report published. 2010 Directory distributed. Links with 'All the Little Shops' e-commerce company. 'Discover Local' project under way focussing on landscape links of food.
<b>Rivers Project</b>	Catchment Management Plan for the River Clun catchment in preparation. Farm advice visits and contact re practical works at 15 sites. Input to 3 events and radio interview on freshwater pearl mussel. SITA funding bid submitted. Contact with national pearl mussel partners.
<b>Woodlands Project</b>	Advisory visits to 20 woodland sites, 6 Management Plans completed. 23 general enquiries including advice on woodland management. Project web page and leaflet published. Collaboration on SITA funding bid.

<b>Shropshire Hills Shuttles</b>	Fares increased and Secret Hills route amended for 2010. Income up but passenger numbers down. Season finished end Sept.
<b>Promotion</b>	5 talks given, arrangements made for talks by Partnership members. 18 press releases issued, 2009-10 Annual Review in design. Shropshire Hills Events programme/ visitor guide for 2011 in preparation. AONB general leaflet reprinted. New AONB website in preparation.
<b>Offa's Country</b>	'Walking with Offa' project under way with Natural Assets funding. Promoted walks from 4 town hubs in development and improvements to interpretation. Cross-border LEADER collaboration project (with 6 other Local Action Groups) in preparation.
<b>Farming Project</b>	Report from Phase 2 pilot project published. LEADER funding secured for Shropshire Hills Farming Project, match application to Big Lottery Reaching Communities fund.
<b>Business advice</b>	Farmer and business advice clinics held at office 23 Sept
<b>Stiperstones – Corndon</b>	Events held spring/ early summer 2010. Detailed planning meetings. Pre-application submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund and meeting 22 Oct.
<b>Project development</b>	Work on 'Walking for Wellbeing' proposal.
<b>Develop the AONB Partnership as an inclusive and effective organisation.</b>	
<b>AONB Partnership and sub-groups</b>	28 meetings held of 16 groups in the AONB Partnership structure. Partnership Tour to Clee Hill 22 June. Contact with new members and reps. Nominations advertised for Chair/Vice Chairs and Management Board. Wrekin Forest Partnership continues to provide a valuable local forum.
<b>AONB Team</b>	Monthly team meetings held and staff appraisals.
<b>Business Planning</b>	Detailed work on scenarios for budget cuts. Work with Team and Management Board on outline Business Plan including proposals to harness charitable donations and increase fee-earning work. Fee earning work carried out by 3 members of Team.
<b>Wider networks</b>	Chairing role for West Midlands Protected Landscapes Forum. Close involvement with National Association for AONBs.
<b>Support the involvement of the community in the management of the AONB (also a cross-cutting theme in some items above).</b>	
<b>Support for groups</b>	46 community groups supported in total (includes SDF, LEADER, etc).
<b>Schools</b>	Assembly at Clun & Brockton Schools. Bilston School visit to Bury Ditches. Clunbury School farm visits.
<b>Support for volunteering</b>	92 memberships of 'Friends of the Shropshire Hills', summer event at Catherton Common, October event at Stiperstones. 252 volunteers involved through AONB-led and supported activities.

## LEADER IN THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS

Approved projects October 2009 to July 2010



### **Ludlow 21 – ‘Grow, Cook and Share’ £42,000**

*A community project that explores growing, cooking and distributing local food.*

The project focuses on providing practical support to existing gardening and cookery clubs in local primary schools, while promoting home-grown fruit and vegetables and home cooking throughout the community. Schools and community centres will also be encouraged to host events where people can bring surplus produce to increase the availability of seasonal fruit and vegetables to the wider community. Two new gardens have been created at Rockspring Community Centre and Ludlow Junior School. Craven Arms Community Centre, with its state of the art training kitchen, will provide an ideal venue for cookery training. Grow, Cook and Share will maximise garden use by teaming up those who would like to grow their own vegetables with those who bring years of knowledge and expertise.

### **Shropshire Wildlife Trust – ‘Once upon a Hill’ £50,000**

*Reconnecting local communities with the history and heritage of mining around the Stiperstones.*

There has been settlement in the Stiperstones area of Shropshire since prehistoric times and lead mining in the hills above Snailbeach since the Romans. In fact ‘pigs’ of lead have been discovered with ‘Hadrian’ inscribed on them. The most recent active mining was in the late 1800s and it was around this time that small settlements began to spread up the hills and across the common land of what is now the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve, managed by Natural England. ‘Once Upon a Hill’ is a partnership project in which the mining communities who once lived on the Stiperstones are to be rediscovered thanks to the rebuilding of two of the cottages near Blakemoorgate, and the conservation of the natural and social history of the area.

### **Homestart £15,000**

*Family support for families in rural isolation.*

Families with children under 5 can experience disadvantage from a range of physical/mental health and social problems. Many of these can be alleviated by appropriate support. In the very rural area of this project social isolation is a key factor, especially because of the paucity of local transport networks and facilities.

This project aims to:

- reduce isolation for single parents, those in domestic violence situations, those without extended family links, those new to the area and those in rurally isolated homes
- Improve child and parent emotional and physical health
- Reduce family conflict & Improve parenting skills
- Improve budgeting skills
- Signposting to local services
- Build cohesion and encourage families to connect with the communities and the landscape of the Shropshire Hills.

### **Bishop’s Castle Tourism CIC - Festivals Officer £39,450**

*To develop and manage the numerous festivals in the Clun Valley and Bishop’s Castle.*

The project aims to:

- provide day to day festival planning and co-ordination work
- recruit new volunteers to help with the running of festivals
- implement a training programme for volunteers
- implement a waste & recycling policy for the area’s festivals

- develop a public transport network for festival days in the area
- develop a case study as a tool for other areas.

### **Hopton Castle Preservation Trust £30,000**

#### *Restoration and interpretation of a historic castle.*

Hopton Castle is one of the most important ancient monuments in the Shropshire Hills, but it has been inaccessible and falling into serious disrepair for many years. The private owner could not afford to repair it and had to keep the public out because of the insurance liabilities. Now it has been purchased by a charitable trust made up of local people and their project will save it for the future, explain its history and enable the public to visit it and learn about its place in history. It has a very important place in the history of Shropshire and the whole country, as it was the site of a famous siege in the Civil War. The project will transform Hopton Castle from a dangerous inaccessible ruin into a safeguarded gem of Shropshire Hills history, open to the public with quality interpretation.

### **Caring for God's Acre – Sacred Spaces £70,000**

This project will provide opportunities that inspire and engage people in the sacred spaces (natural, historical and spiritual) of the Shropshire Hills, which will help develop a sense of place and a deeper connection with the landscape in which they live. Via management plans, interpretation, increased practical management, increased community awareness and engagement, sites will be better understood, valued and conserved.

### **Soil Association – School Farmers Markets £40,000**

Development of 18 new Farmers' Markets held in schools. The aim of the project is to revitalise local food communities based around the hubs of schools in disadvantaged areas, and in so doing generate educational, social and economic benefits to the Shropshire Hills area.

### **Bishop's Castle Heritage Centre – Chronicles of the Shropshire Hills £44,139**

This project will gather and share information about history and heritage in parishes around Bishop's Castle. The project will promote a sense of identity and cohesion of the communities and secure their heritage for future generations.

### **Shropshire Council - Developing Much Wenlock as hub for discovering East Shropshire £30,000**

This project will develop circular walks around Much Wenlock and the Shropshire Way. The project will make Much Wenlock a hub for discovering East Shropshire on foot. It will deliver a complete 'walking package' for the benefit of the local community, businesses and visitors to the area.

### **Light Foot Enterprises – Farm Carbon £50,000**

This project will set the Shropshire Hills on a low carbon farming pathway ahead of the rest of the UK. It will audit farm carbon on 160 farms over two years whilst also providing learning and disseminating opportunities through demonstration low carbon farms and bringing together a farmer based Advisory Body on carbon.

### **Shropshire AONB Partnership - Discover Local £39,277**

Discover Local will encourage local people, visitors and businesses to use local food, drink and medicinal products that in themselves help conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Shropshire Hills- whether those are commercial or 'free' products. The project will work with businesses through the Shropshire Hills Buy Local Initiative and with the wider community through a series of events and workshops to challenge everyone to gather, buy and cook foods that are all around them. A core focus of the work will be traditional skills- for example; preserving, curing and cider making, and a co-operation project will be developed to share these skills with a project in north Shropshire called 'Meres and Mosses' and with other countries

in Europe, in particular with groups in Slovenia. The outcomes of the project will be: better awareness of wild and gathered foods and the habitats that support them; better promotion of the benefits of sustainability; more self sufficient local supply chains; increased profitability for businesses and increased choice and quality for local people and visitors. It will also reduce the impact of local business on climate change and the environment, resulting in more resilient communities.

#### **Craven Arms CIC – Into the Hills £35,000**

'Into the Hills' is a way of extending the ArtWalk into the landscape and hills around Craven Arms. Through the vehicle of art (and specifically land art) we will encourage people to walk into, to play with, take notice of, and to enjoy the natural environment all around them, throughout the year and to gradually venture further and further out into the landscape. It is intended to create six pieces of sculpture in the Onny Meadow over the next two years and three walks to destination sculptures linked to the Shropshire Way.

#### **Small Woods Association – Forest School £23,746**

Forest School provision for one year for two schools in the Shropshire Hills AONB and one nursery. The project will provide Level 3 Forest School Leader training and support for three staff creating three sustainable Forest School projects within the Shropshire Hills area.

#### **Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership – Shropshire Hills Farming Project £61,000**

This project aims to improve the sustainability of some of the most remote rural communities in Shropshire by targeting the most disadvantaged farmers and their families in the Less Favoured Areas of the Shropshire Hills AONB. This will help to develop a better integrated rural community, improving understanding of farming and food production, increasing support for local products and low carbon opportunities and making it as easy as possible to develop more viable farming businesses.

#### **The Hive - Youthful Landscapes £30,000**

Youthful Landscapes is an innovative three year project designed to connect young people from Shropshire and Telford with the unique Shropshire Hills landscape. The vision is for young people to find a way of connecting with their local landscape through practical & creative activities. The aim is to nurture enjoyment, understanding and respect for the Shropshire Hills. Young people will be given the opportunity to develop valuable, vocational skills and be inspired to use the landscape to express their creativity in new and interesting ways.

#### **Mayfair Centre – A to Z of the Shropshire Hills £48,198**

A community based approach to developing a sense of place while creating a range of locally distinctive souvenirs and mementos of Church Stretton and the Shropshire Hills and supporting the work of the Mayfair Community Centre.

More detailed information is provided on projects which are further advanced. Further updates and additions will be provided periodically.

For further information please contact Pete Banford, LEADER Co-ordinator, e-mail: [pete.banford@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:pete.banford@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01588 674089.

September 2010



LEADER in the Shropshire Hills summary funding update, 8 October 2010

	RDPE Measure					
	Connect 321	Be Active 322	Take notice 323	Keep Learning 331	Co- operation 421	Totals
<b>Projects under way</b>						
Ludlow 21 - Grow, Cook and Share	£42,000					
Shropshire Wildlife Trust - Once upon a Hill			£50,000			
Homestart - Family support	£15,000					
Bishop's Castle Tourism - Festivals Officer	£39,450					
Hopton Castle Preservation Trust - Castle restoration			£30,000			
Caring for God's Acre - Sacred Spaces through the ages		£70,000				
Soil Association - School Farmers' Markets	£40,000					
Shropshire Council - Developing Much Wenlock as hub for discovering east Shropshire	£30,000					
Light Foot Enterprises - Farm Carbon	£50,000					
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership - Discover Local	£39,277					
Craven Arts CIC - Into the Hills		£35,000				
Small Woods - Forest School		£23,747				
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£255,727</b>	<b>£128,747</b>	<b>£80,000</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£464,474</b>
<b>Projects approved awaiting match funding</b>						
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership- Farming Project		£61,000				
The Hive - Youthful Landscapes	£30,000					
Bishop Castle Heritage Centre - Chronicles of the Shropshire Hills			£44,139			
Mayfair Centre - A to Z of the Shropshire Hills	£48,198					
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£78,198</b>	<b>£61,000</b>	<b>£44,139</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£183,337</b>
<b>Overall Total for Measure</b>	<b>£312,500</b>	<b>£250,000</b>	<b>£250,000</b>	<b>£125,000</b>	<b>£62,500</b>	<b>£1,000,000</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>£333,925</b>	<b>£189,747</b>	<b>£124,139</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£647,811</b>
<b>Remaining Grant</b>	<b>-£21,425</b>	<b>£60,253</b>	<b>£125,861</b>	<b>£125,000</b>	<b>£62,500</b>	<b>£352,189</b>