

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

Date: Monday, 16 November
2020

Committee:
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

Date: Tuesday, 24 November 2020
Time: 9.30 am
Venue: THIS IS A VIRTUAL MEETING

Members of the public will be able to listen to this meeting by clicking on this link:
<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/shropshirehillsaonbpartnership24november2020/>

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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)	Gillian Binks
Hilary Claytonsmith (Vice Chairman)	Sarah Bury
Cecilia Motley (Vice Chairman)	Veronica Cossons
Heather Kidd	Helen Dale
Robert Tindall	Ian Dormor
David Turner	Charles Edwards
Chris Turley	Patrick Edwards
Alison Caffyn	Rhona Goddard
George Chancellor	Carol Griffiths
Adrian Cullis	Robert Harris
Chris Naylor	Lizzie Hulton-Harrop
Andrew Wood	Alan Jones
Mark Hughes	Bill Klemperer
John Long	Sue Lee
David Mills	Hazel MacDowell
Steve Pennington	Ronald Repath
John Pritchard	Leo Smith
Sonja Belchere	Donna Tavenor

Your Committee Officer is:

Tim Ward Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 257713

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence

2 Minutes of the last meeting (Pages 1 - 6)

The note of the meeting held on 8 November 2019 is attached for confirmation

3 South Shropshire Climate Conference and Shropshire Climate Action Partnership (Pages 7 - 10)

This paper provides information on two complementary community climate action partnerships, and seeks active engagement and support for these from Partnership members.

4 Shropshire Local Plan and Planning Policy for the AONB (Pages 11 - 14)

This paper summarises some of the key issues raised in the AONB Partnership's response to the Shropshire draft Local Plan consultation and considers future approaches to planning policy affecting the AONB.

5 Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme tests & trials in the Shropshire Hills AONB (Pages 15 - 24)

This paper provides background material to support brief presentations from the National Trust, Soil Association, NFU, Pollardine Farm, and Shropshire Wildlife Trust on the various ELM Test & Trials currently operating in the Shropshire Hills AONB.

6 National Association for AONBs and Europarc Federation (Pages 25 - 30)

This paper provides information on relevant recent activity of the National Association for AONBs and the Europarc Federation.

7 AONB Management Plan Progress Report, Green Recovery Challenge Fund bids and partner activity (Pages 31 - 36)

This agenda item provides an opportunity for partner updates on activity.

8 Shropshire Community and Rural Strategy consultation (Pages 37 - 38)

This paper highlights to members the current consultation on a Community and Rural Strategy for Shropshire, which runs till 6th December 2020.

9 Date of Next Meeting



Shropshire Hills
AONB Partnership

24 March 2020
9.30 am

Item

2

Public

MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP MEETING HELD ON 8 OCTOBER 2019 9.30 AM - 12.00 PM

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

Present

Local Authorities

Shropshire Council

Cllr Heather Kidd
Cllr Cecilia Motley (Vice Chair)
Cllr Robert Tindall
Cllr David Turner

Telford & Wrekin Council

Cllr Chris Turley

Statutory/Voluntary Agencies & Individual members

Individual Member	Adrian Cullis
Individual Member	Chris Naylor
Individual Member	James Williamson (Chair)
Individual Member	Andrew Wood
Town & Parish Council representative	Hilary Clayton-Smith
Town & Parish Council representative	John Long
Town & Parish Council representative	Steven Pennington
British Horse Society	Ronald Repath
Caring for Gods Acre	Gill Binks
Country Land & Business Association	Helen Dale
Historic England	Alison McDonald
Land Life & Livelihoods	Robert Harris
Middle Marches Community Land Trust	Richard Keymer
Ramblers Association	Charles Edwards
Shropshire Wildlife Trust	Veronica Cossons
The Strettons Civic Society	Ian Dormor
Upper Onney Wildlife Group	Leo Smith

Observers/Officers

Shropshire Council	Clare Featherstone (Interim Head of Culture & Leisure) Tim Ward (Committee Officer)
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Staff Team	Phil Holden (AONB Partnership Manager) Alison Jones (Clun Catchment Officer) Nigel McDonald (Sustainable Tourism Officer) Steph Hayes (Promotions Officer)

11 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

- 11.1 The Chairman welcomed Adrian Cullis and Chris Naylor to their first meeting of the Partnership. He also welcomed Richard Keymer who was representing the Middle Marches Community Land Trust, David Howard from Stretton Climate Care and Paul Hayward from the Environment Agency.
- 11.2 Apologies for absence had been received from Sonja Belchere (Visit Shropshire Hills), Sarah Bury (CPRE), Alison Caffyn (Individual Member), Carol Griffiths (NFU), Rhona Goddard (Butterfly Conservation), Lizzie Hulton Harrop (Middle Marches Community Land Trust), Mark Hughes (Individual Member), Emma Johnson (Natural England), Hazel McDowall (Natural England) and David Mills (Town & Parish Council Rep).

12 Minutes of the last meeting

- 12.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019 had been circulated.
- 12.2 Resolved:
- That the minutes of the meeting of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership held on 11 June 2019 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
- 12.3 The AONB Partnership Manager informed the meeting that the amended terms of reference had been approved by both Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council.

13 Appointment of Chair, Vice Chairs and six seats on Strategy & Performance Committee

13.1 Appointment of Chair

The AONB Partnership Manager advised that one nomination had been received for the position of Chair.

Resolved:

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

13.2 Appointment of Vice Chairs

The AONB Partnership Manager reminded the meeting that there were 2 Vice Chair positions, one for a Unitary Councillor and one for a non-councillor. He advised the meeting that two nominations had been received.

Resolved:

That Cllr Cecilia Motley and Ms Hilary Claytonsmith be appointed Vice Chairs of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership.

13.3 Appointments to Seats on the Strategy and Performance Committee

The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that there were 6 vacancies for seats on the Strategy and Performance Committee and the 4 nominations had been received prior to the meeting. 1 nomination was received at the meeting.

Resolved:

That Lady Veronica Cossons, Cllr Heather Kidd, Mr John Long, Cllr David Turner and Mr Andrew Wood be appointed to serve on the Strategy and Performance Committee.

The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that the Committee could co-opt to fill the vacancy and that if any one was interested on serving, they should contact him or the Chairman.

13.4 The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that there were currently 2 vacancies for trustees on the AONB Trust, one appointed by the Partnership and one for a non-Partnership Member. Members were asked to contact him if they were interested.

14 **Report of the Glover Review**

14.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which provided a summary of the Glover Review final report.

14.2 Members generally welcomed the content of the report and asked how responses were to be made. The AONB Partnership Manager stated that he would feed comments to the NAAONB to enable a national response to be made but that there was no reason why the Partnership could not make an individual response as well.

14.3 Mrs Kidd asked whether Shropshire Council would be making a response as there was quite a lot in the review that could be built into the draft local plan proposals. The Interim Head of Culture and Leisure advised members that officers had regular meetings with the Director of Place.

14.4 The Chairman asked Members to feed any further comments to the AONB Partnership Manager as soon as possible so that they could be included in the response.

15 Environment & Climate Emergency

- 15.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which set out the background on national and local declaration of emergencies and some draft recommendations to the Councils from the AONB Partnership on nature recovery; on farming and land management; and on development, energy, transport and tourism.
- 15.2 The Interim Head of Culture and Leisure drew attention to the recommendations contained in the report and suggested some amended wording. Members generally accepted the amendments after making some minor amendments.
- 15.3 Resolved:

That the following recommendations be made to Shropshire Council and the Council of Telford & Wrekin -

Recommendation 1 - Nature recovery:

Nature decline is as threatening an emergency as climate change and both are inextricably linked. Nature recovery and restoring resilient ecosystems also provide some of the essential solutions to reaching zero carbon emissions, as well as addressing many other factors vital for our survival and quality of life. These are not just distant global issues, they are the main challenges now for the Shropshire Hills. It is strongly recommended that the Councils include nature recovery in their formal declarations.

Recommendation 2 - Farming and land management for zero carbon and nature recovery:

The Councils have an important role shaping and influencing the future of their areas, as well as directly providing services. While they have less direct involvement in land management than some other factors, making change in this area will be vital to achieving net zero carbon emissions and nature recovery. It is strongly recommended that the Councils play an active part in this and consider increasing their capacity to do this, including training of members and senior officers.

Recommendation 3 – Development, energy, transport & tourism for zero carbon and nature recovery:

In these areas the Councils have a greater lead. Net zero and nature recovery cannot be achieved if the political and corporate focus is on economic growth at all costs. It is strongly recommended that the Councils build the goals of net zero and nature recovery into their visions at the highest levels. Doing this can deliver better quality of life for people as well as new forms of economic activity which are truly sustainable. On energy and transport we need to talk about managing demand as well as changing supply. This may mean people consuming less and travelling less. This future is not unthinkable and can benefit people.

- 15.4 The meeting broke up into 3 workshop groups covering, nature recovery, farming and land management for zero carbon and energy, transport and tourism for zero carbon. The AONB Partnership Manager advised that feedback from the groups would be used to guide further work on the subject.

16 Judicial Review regarding implementation of the Habitats Directive, River Clun SAC

- 16.1 The AONB Partnership Manager reminded members that there was a Judicial Review regarding the government's failure to deliver Habitats Directive obligations on the health of freshwater sites in the UK including the Clun Catchment.
- 16.2 The meeting received a presentation from Paul Hayward which gave an update on a study carried out in the Clun Catchment area to assess the extent of the problems and to look at possible solutions.
- 16.3 Members commented that whatever solution was employed it would be hard to overcome all the problems identified.

17 Proposed Development Plan Document for the AONB

- 17.1 The meeting received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which proposed a planning policy Development Plan Document (DPD) for the Shropshire Hills AONB.
- 17.2 The AONB Partnership Manager reminded Members that local authorities were required to give special consideration to AONBs as part of the planning process and that a DPD specifically for the AONB area had the potential to reduce conflict and the large workload associated with contentious site allocations and major planning casework. He drew members attention to the DPD for the Arnside & Silverdale AONB which had recently been adopted by Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council.
- 17.3 Members welcomed the proposals and agreed that the production of such a document would strengthen the protection of the AONB from inappropriate development.

18 Ironbridge Power Station Site Redevelopment

- 18.1 Members received the report of the AONB which provided an update on the Ironbridge Power Station redevelopment proposal.
- 18.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised members that the AONB Partnership had submitted a response to the Strategic Sites Consultation, and that he had held meetings with senior officers to discuss the concerns of the AONB Partnership.
- 18.3 Mrs Kidd commented that part of the proposal was for the removal of sand and gravel and that there was often opportunity for community gain as part of this and she wondered whether the AONB would be able to benefit from this.

19 Capacity Building project - Youth engagement and feasibility for ongoing leadership activity with the Partnership

- 19.1 The meeting received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which set out a process for youth engagement for the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership.

- 19.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that as part of the Resilient Heritage Project, the Partnership was exploring opportunities to embed youth involvement more widely in the work of the AONB, and that a contact had been let to the South Shropshire Youth Forum to carry out a consultation process with young people to examine what form of youth involvement or representation could be developed.
- 19.3 Members commented that the work with the John Muir Award had been very successful and hoped that this could be built on.

20 **Date of Next Meetings**

- 20.1 The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that dates for future meetings were in the process of being set and that members would be informed of the dates when they were to hand.

Signed (Chairman)

Date:



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 24 th November 2020	<u>Item</u> 3
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SOUTH SHROPSHIRE CLIMATE CONFERENCE AND SHROPSHIRE CLIMATE ACTION PARTNERSHIP

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254741

Summary

This paper provides information on two complementary community climate action partnerships, and seeks active engagement and support for these from Partnership members.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended formally to support the partnerships and to identify ways for their own organisations, or as individuals, to contribute through signing up as supporters and active involvement.

Background

On the back of widespread declarations of Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2019 and a ramping up of activity, active community-led partnerships have formed in both South Shropshire and the county as a whole. These are doing vital work in charting the local course to net zero carbon emissions and ecological recovery, and deserve our active support. There is much valuable synergy with activity of the AONB Partnership, which we will continue to develop.

South Shropshire Climate Action Group <https://shropshireclimateaction.co.uk/>

This group formed from a public event in Craven Arms in November 2019 attended by Philip Dunne. A planned conference for May 2020 was amended into an online event held on 26th September 2020. This was attended by 120 people, and after overall sessions, split into theme groups of Transport, Energy & Buildings and Land & Biodiversity. Phil Holden made a presentation in the Land & Biodiversity session on integrating climate change and nature recovery responses. Recordings of the event can be viewed here <https://shropshireclimateaction.co.uk/conference-recordings/>.

A comprehensive set of resources has been gathered on the excellent website, including documents, videos and case studies under the three themes <https://shropshireclimateaction.co.uk/resources/>.

The Group has set out in its Statement of Purpose of September 2020 that

“We are looking for interested individuals to collaborate in working groups to research and devise practical ideas and solutions which can be implemented and put into practice in South Shropshire. The ideas will be recorded and drawn together in a clear and usable way; hence we describe a report or manual or handbook.

We don't quite know what it will look like, but it will be a 'live' document, which can be added to as experience or application indicates. It's a place where you will be able to find out what is already happening, who to contact or visit, a resource where great ideas are collected together, where a person, a business, an organisation in everyday South Shropshire can find out what to do next to reduce carbon outputs.”

The group is focussing on the geographical area of the Ludlow constituency, and remains in close contact with Philip Dunne. There is an intention to take output of the group to the delayed COP26 meeting being hosted by the UK.

We have been closely involved with the Land & Biodiversity theme group, which has engaged around 38 people willing to contribute following the conference to developing the follow-up plan. This involves looking at data needs, technical knowledge and networking.

Shropshire Climate Action Partnership (SCAP) <https://zerocarbonschropshire.org/>

This Shropshire-wide group developed during 2020 with a combination of grassroots community initiative, and support from Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council. The Partnership describes its work as follows:

Bringing together organisations, businesses, and communities across Shropshire, through collaboration, knowledge-sharing and empowerment, SCAP will support rapid decarbonisation, large-scale restoration of biodiversity and the natural environment, and the development of the sustainable, resilient, and inclusive communities and enterprises needed for a sustainable future.

The first step is to develop a practical zero carbon Shropshire plan (ZCSP) by the end of 2020, and to achieve support from stakeholders for immediate implementation. SCAP will draw on the world class expertise of the Shropshire environmental technology sector and enterprises offering products and services for the sustainable future we need.

After this, from January 2021, SCAP will expand its scope to oversee the implementation, updating and further refinement of the ZCSP, and support Shropshire residents and businesses to achieve the rapid shift away from fossil fuels that we need. SCAP will work alongside organisations, businesses, communities and local residents to engage, build consensus, and maintain support for the actions and the key milestones along the road to a net zero Shropshire by 2030.

The work of the Shropshire Climate Action Partnership is being undertaken by working groups focused on different themes:

- Consumption and Resources
- Buildings

- Land and Biodiversity
- Energy
- Transport

Organisations can become members and individuals can also sign up, and members of the Partnership are encouraged to do this.

The Land & Biodiversity group is working on the following sub-themes and would welcome further involvement of people in these areas:

- Rivers, waterways, streams & wetlands
- Woodland & agroforestry
- Food production
- Energy production
- Local green spaces
- Recreation & tourism
- Nature reserves
- Hedgerows

Other more local groups

The resources page for our Climate event for community groups has proved popular.

<https://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/a-special-place/resources/environment-and-climate-emergency>

Parish groups focussed on climate are active in a number of places. Clunbury is one good example (see page 5 of <https://www.theparishpost.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/parish-post-july-2020-for-reading-on-screen.pdf>). Information on others would be useful to share.

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

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<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 24 th November 2020	<u>Item</u> 4
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SHROPSHIRE LOCAL PLAN AND PLANNING POLICY FOR THE AONB

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254741

Summary

This paper summarises some of the key issues raised in the AONB Partnership's response to the Shropshire draft Local Plan consultation and considers future approaches to planning policy affecting the AONB.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note and comment on the information provided and to support the proposal not to take further at the present time the idea of a Development Plan Document (DPD) for the Shropshire Hills AONB.

Background

Comments on the draft Local Plan

The AONB Partnership's comments were submitted on 9th October after a short extension was granted. Comments were made on the following policies:

Policy DP26 Shropshire Hills AONB. This is the first specific and distinct policy for the Shropshire Hills AONB, and is welcomed. Detailed suggestions made on improved wording.

S5 Church Stretton Place Plan Area Objection to allocation of CST021 Snatchfield Farm site for 70 houses.

'Exceptional circumstances for major development in the AONB' supporting document

Suggestions made to add information on consideration of alternatives etc in relation to Church Stretton sites, Clee Hill and Clun. Including the alternative of additional hubs and clusters.

Minor comments of wording on:

SP3. Climate Change

SP4. Sustainable Development

SP5. High-Quality Design

SP10. Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy

SP11. Delivering Sustainable Economic Growth and Enterprise

SP7. Managing Development in Community Hubs

SP8. Managing Development in Community Clusters

Suggestion to review the allocation of Community Hubs and Clusters in order to achieve a landscape-led approach to housing allocation for local need within the AONB.

SP9. Managing Development in the Countryside

Suggestion to add material on large intensive livestock units, which have been the commonest form of major development within the AONB in the last decade. And on large scale renewable energy installations (i.e. those not directly associated with other built development, but sited in the countryside).

SP9 Strategic Corridors

Consider the indirect impacts on the AONB of this policy, especially increase in road traffic on the A49.

DP11. Tourism, Culture and Leisure

Detailed comments for stronger representation of sustainable tourism.

DP13. The Natural Environment

Suggestion to add references to biodiversity loss and the ecological emergency being as significant as climate change, to the fact that the natural environment keeps us alive and is hugely positive to people's health and wellbeing, and to the need for development to support nature recovery. Suggestion also to make reference to how a healthy natural environment underpins both the land sector (farming and forestry) and visitor economy, and the jobs they support.

Minor comments of detail on:

DP14. Development in the River Clun Catchment

DP17. Landscaping of New Development

DP18. Landscape and Visual Amenity

DP19. Pollution and Public Amenity

DP20. Water Resources and Water Quality

DP30. Health and Wellbeing

DP 33. Managing Development and Operation of Mineral Sites

S20. Strategic Settlement: Former Ironbridge Power Station

Comments including the policy should refer to the scale of development reflecting its proximity to the AONB, as well as design and layout.

Potential for an AONB-specific Development Plan Document (DPD)

This is not a proposal within the Local Plan, but was raised by us in a paper to the AONB Partnership meeting of 8th October 2019 (<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/s23249/7.%20Proposed%20DPD.pdf>). This followed the completion in the Arnside and Silverdale AONB of the first ever AONB-specific DPD, which has been hailed as national good practice. The agreed action for us was to explore the possibility with Shropshire Council of pursuing a DPD for the Shropshire Hills AONB. Having had discussions with the Council, it is apparent that:

- The new Local Plan gives greater recognition to the AONB than previously, and embeds it across many policy areas. Drawing AONB policy out into a separate document might therefore actually be a backward step.
- The five years of considerable work by the AONB team and local planning authorities to produce a DPD for Arnside and Silverdale, a small AONB, might well be exceeded for the Shropshire Hills covering quarter of a county, and capacity does not exist on either side to do this. It is also far from certain how different the outcome would be, in terms specifically of housing allocations, though this is not the only topic.

For these reasons it is felt that, while it was worthy of consideration, the idea of a DPD for the Shropshire Hills AONB is not viable or practical. The recommendation is therefore not to take this further at the current time, but rather to continue to work with the Planning Policy teams of the two Councils in other ways to advance the cause of the AONB.

List of Background Papers
Full Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership response to Local Plan consultation https://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/our-work/aonb-partnership/Documents/Local%20Plan%20-%20Shropshire%20Hills%20AONB%20Partnership%20comments%209%20Oct%202020.pdf
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 topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
Appendices
None

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<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 24 th November 2020	<u>Item</u> 6
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ENVIRONMENTAL LAND MANAGEMENT (ELM) SCHEME TEST & TRIALS IN THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254741

Summary

This paper provides background material to support brief presentations which will be made on the various ELM Test & Trials currently operating in the Shropshire Hills AONB.

Recommendation

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

Background

The Agriculture Act was passed into law on 11th November and enshrines a key principle of public money supporting farming in future being tied to the delivery of public benefits. Direct payments to farmers will be phased out over a transition period to the end of 2027, and one of the main mechanisms being developed to fund the delivery of public benefits is the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM).

Through a bidding process, Defra have commissioned and funded a series of Tests & Trials around the country, each looking at a particular theme. These will be followed by Pilots, with the full scheme expected to be rolled out fully in 2024, when it will replace the existing agri-environment schemes (Countryside Stewardship, etc).

Each Test & Trial reports to Defra directly, and the latest headline findings are in Appendix 1. There is no particular requirement for local networking, but the aim of this item is to share information on the Tests & Trials which are operating in the AONB. These are:

- National Trust led Test & Trial in the Stepping Stones area focussing on the role of Whole Farm Plans. This Test & Trial is working with an Upper Onny Farmers group brought together for this purpose. Cath Landles from the AONB team has been contracted to lead much of the farmer engagement. The plans themselves are being produced by consultant farm advisers. Andrew Hearle from the National Trust will present briefly on this.
- NFU Test and Trial focussing on the role of farm advice, across Shropshire. Sarah Faulkner is not able to be present at the meeting but has supplied information for a short presentation.

- Soil Association Test & Trial Testing the Public Goods Tool for ELM. Karen Fisher of the Soil Association will present briefly on this.
- Lizzie Hulton Harrop of Pollardine Farm, Gatten, is leading a Test & Trial looking at landowners working together. Lizzie will present briefly on this.
- Shropshire Wildlife Trust Test & Trial 'Connecting the Clees' in the Clee Hills. We hope that a representative of the Wildlife Trust will present on this.

Other relevant activity:

NAAONB 'Farming for the Nation' ELM Test & Trial

A dozen AONBs are working on a collaborative national test & trial. This will help to inform the role of AONB teams in the scheme.

NAAONB ELM Advocacy project

Defra funding has recently been secured for AONB teams around the country to undertake a small amount of farmer engagement work on ELM in the period up to March 2021. This is intended to add to other work being carried out and gradually to develop the anticipated role of AONB teams to support (rather than directly deliver) the ELM scheme.

List of Background Papers

Further back ground information available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-environmental-land-management-scheme-an-overview/the-environmental-land-management-scheme-public-money-for-public-goods>

Environmental Land Management tests and trials Quarterly evidence report July 2020

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925522/elm-tt-july20.pdf

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 topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Extract from Defra Environmental Land Management tests and trials Quarterly evidence report July 2020

Headline findings and learning points by priority theme

The following section outlines the headline points gathered to date by each priority theme and some case study highlights. As many tests and trials are still in early stages, in future reports we will be seeking to understand where there is consensus with or divergence from some of these points, as well as drawing out additional points. This quarterly report covers findings that have been shared **to the end of May 2020**. We have ordered the key findings under each priority theme, with some points about cross-cutting findings and potential gaps drawn together in the final section.

Land Management Plans – Headline findings

- There is a consensus that land management plans are an important building block for ELM in setting out what participants of the scheme will deliver, how and by when.
- Tests and trials are beginning to provide learning for land management plan design principles on content, format, scale, function and data requirements. Clarity on purpose of the plan will inform what it needs to contain and the best way of presenting that information.
- Land management plans will need to balance the complexity of natural capital mapping, land management activity and public good delivery with simplicity in terms of content and format. It needs to be useful for farmers and land managers in delivering their agreement.
- Land management plans should include an environmental baseline, a map and a potential public goods delivery assessment.
- A different approach will likely be needed for different spatial scales. At the farm or holding level, there is a preference for a plan that covers the whole farm or holding. However, concerns have been raised about the time and data required to complete a land management plan, particularly for larger holdings or estates.
- There is an emerging consensus that providing a land management plan template or guide would be welcome, but this shouldn't be too restrictive as one size will not fit all. Some tests and trials are exploring the applicability of existing templates and 13 will provide land management plan templates or content recommendations as a key output.
- Participant farmers and land managers have responded positively to using apps and digital tools to support their land management planning, but there needs to be a choice to ensure accessibility. Advice and facilitation will be important if relying on digital tools, particularly for smaller farmers. There remains value in using paper documents and maps.
- Involving farmers and land managers in developing a land management plan can help to increase understanding of natural capital and public goods and how they can be delivered alongside commercial activity. However, the role of an advisor is key in accessing and interpreting data, applying this to planning tools, and supporting farmers and land managers to make decisions about their plans.
- There are challenges around data – in terms of accessibility, gaps, numerous sources, and costs. Affordable, publicly accessible data would be welcome. It would also be helpful if datasets are able to be integrated into a single system or platform to aid the comparison and transfer of data.

- There are differing views on whether plans should be made public. Making land management plans public will help farmers and land managers to communicate the environmental benefits and public goods they are delivering, increasing transparency. Some participant farmers would prefer that sensitive business data is not made public.

Advice and Guidance - Headline findings

- Expert advice has a **key role** to play within a new ELM scheme in terms of: land management planning, increasing take up of the new scheme, encouraging behaviour change, monitoring delivery of public goods and group facilitation.
- Advisors can also help 'level the playing field' in terms of supporting farmers and land managers to use **data and technology**.
- Advice is **needed throughout the scheme process** – from initial assessment to developing plans, to monitoring delivery and reviewing plans. In terms of monitoring delivery, some tests and trials are finding that participants are interested in self-assessment but would need support in developing indicators and how to measure these.
- Some tests and trials have found existing guidance can be focussed on adhering to rules. There is a preference emerging for **guidance** that focusses on **how to deliver** the best outcomes.
- There is **no clear consensus on who should pay** for advice. Some participants feel that as advice is an integral part of successfully delivering ELM and in achieving the environmental ambitions, it should be funded. However, where farmers and land managers see a clear financial benefit to paid advice, they may be more willing and able to pay for it.
- Farmers and land managers are likely to require access to a **range of specialist advice**. There may be value in having access to a 'general practitioner' with overarching knowledge, who can then signpost to specialists where required.
- There is an emerging consensus around what is important in an advisor including being personable and **honest**, consistent and having **good local knowledge**. Having strong environmental knowledge and being able to **communicate** that simply and effectively is also considered beneficial.
- There is emerging evidence of low levels of understanding around the new ELM scheme and key concepts such as public goods, natural capital and ecosystem services. Some basic guidance and 'how to' guides to help farmers to understand expectations and best practice would be welcome.

Spatial prioritisation - Headline findings

- Most of the tests and trials looking at spatial prioritisation are still in the data collation phase. Feedback indicates there are currently multiple data sources but **data availability, accessibility and consistency** vary dramatically. Feedback indicates that consistent, open-access data would be welcome.
- The availability and accessibility to data varies dramatically across the country, particularly in the case of **local data sets**, so the level of detail required for spatial prioritisation is not always readily available.
- Spatial prioritisation data needs to be **available to farmers and land managers**, but **support may be required** to interpret this and apply to their holdings through, for example, an advisor. Other tools such as a 'score card' outlining local priority outcomes could help to simplify the process for land managers, but this requires further testing.

- There are potential benefits to **incorporating local information and knowledge** in determining local priorities including: increasing ‘buy-in’ from both land managers and local communities; increasing a sense of ownership of delivery and encouraging collaboration.
- There is a value to incorporating **local knowledge** alongside ‘hard’ data. Some participants also felt that **‘social data’**, such as collaboration and local stakeholder and community needs, should be included alongside ecological data in determining priorities, but there wasn’t a clear consensus. There are tests and trials looking at how to incorporate priorities of local communities, but these are at an early stage of delivery.
- Participant farmers and land managers feel there is value in their **involvement in discussions and decisions on local priorities**. Farmers are best-placed to evaluate the appropriateness of delivering priorities on their land and have benefited from greater ownership and empowerment by being involved in the decision-making process.
- A number of tests and trials have highlighted that farmers are particularly **motivated by local rather than national priorities**. For example, in supporting efforts to restore local priority wildlife species or addressing context-specific issues such as flood mitigation and water management.
- Setting local priorities and increasing likelihood of effective delivery may require a **combination of ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches**. A number of tests and trials are also looking at the role of local governance – including setting priorities, leveraging blended finance and, monitoring delivery but it is too early to share findings.

Collaboration - Headline findings

- There are emerging findings around common factors that enable effective collaboration including: the role of a **local trusted facilitator**, developing a **common goal** with clear benefits for those involved, and **financial incentives** (either immediate or future potential).
- There are numerous **models of collaboration** that could help to maximise delivery of environmental outcomes. These include, but are not limited to, land manager-to-land manager collaboration, facilitated cluster groups and formal partnerships, or engagement activity across a range of organisations and even the wider local community.
- Different collaboration models may be needed across different geographical locations and depending on the public goods being sought or delivered. The extent of existing collaboration between land managers **varies across geographies and sectors**.
- Many tests and trials looking at collaboration are in early stages but will provide a range of case studies to inform thinking on how to effectively encourage collaboration within ELM. This should add valuable insight on potential models to the wealth of research on the subject that already exists.
- There are emerging findings coming through our **innovative delivery mechanisms** tests and trials. Payment by Results and Reverse Auctions could support collaboration between farmers and land managers if they are run in a particular way. Conversely, where they increase competition between farmers and land managers, they could support existing collaboration relationships.

Payments - Headline findings

- There is an emerging consensus that the income foregone plus costs incurred approach is not a **strong financial incentive**. Farmers are often not compensated sufficiently for activity undertaken, particularly where capital costs are incurred, and the maintenance of existing assets is not rewarded under existing agri-environment schemes.
- Many farmers and land managers participating in tests and trials view a **tiered payments system** favourably and consider it an effective approach to incentivising different activities. For example, when delivering multiple benefits there could be stacked payments, such as with woodland creation and management, which is poorly supported under current schemes. Another example was a basic payment for asset maintenance, and additional payments for asset extension or condition improvement.
- A tiered payment approach could support **targeting priority habitats or species**. It could also include a financial uplift for **collaborating at landscape scale**, for example to connect habitats for nature recovery networks or catchment water management.
- Participants are positive about moving towards a more outcome-focussed payment approach. However, for **payment by results (PbR) approaches** more work is needed to determine the optimum basis for payments. There are also concerns around the impact of external risks to delivery and ensuring financial sustainability in a purely outcome-focussed approach.
- Ideas for balancing an outcomes-based approach with **financial sustainability** include: reducing cashflow concerns through an annual basic payment for participating, alongside payments for capital works, ongoing payments for maintenance and 'bonus' payment for delivery of outcomes. Longer agreements for creation and maintenance of natural capital assets such as woodland would be welcomed to provide financial stability ahead of delivery of outcomes.

- If moving towards a fully outcomes-based approach, farmers will need clarity on the potential **return on their investment**. Some tests and trials have found that private finance opportunities, such as carbon and biodiversity off-setting, could help to encourage take-up if ELM payments are not deemed a sufficient financial incentive.
- Some tests and trials have noted that participants would welcome a points-based approach to payments, but there are conflicting views on this. Concerns were raised around the options available and **regional variations**.
- There are currently conflicting views on the use of **reverse auctions**. Countryside Facilitation Fund (CSFF) participants felt this could drive a 'race-to-the-bottom' rather than encouraging the most effective outcomes.
- The CSFF groups also felt that there was **potential to encourage collaboration** through reverse auctions at a landscape scale, but if individual land managers were bidding this would increase competition and risk undermining collaboration. Emerging evidence supports the view that these are better placed for **landscape scale outcomes**, but our tests and trials on these are still in early stages.
- Feedback on collaboration has indicated that there needs to be a clear financial incentive to participants, for example through **managing efficiencies** in delivering public goods or having a **clear financial return** through ELM or blended finance options. There may also need to be funding made available for facilitators to initiate collaborative working.
- Many tests and trials are in early stages of applying **natural capital approaches**. Early feedback indicates that this is a complicated process, which requires capacity-building and/or **advisor support**. We do not yet have any substantial findings on the applicability of natural capital valuation to determining payment rates.
- In an outcomes-based approach, we need to establish effective **mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating outcomes** to inform both payment triggers and allow demonstration of value for money.
- Across our tests and trials, participants have indicated that **clarity on what the system will pay for and the payment rates** are critical to encouraging scheme take up and incentivising the desired activity.

Innovative Delivery Mechanisms - Headline findings

- Most tests and trials contributing to this theme are longer-term trials of over 12 months in duration. We therefore only have initial findings at this point.
- Participants of the **Payment by Results** (PbR) trials have indicated that they welcome the more flexible approach but do have financial concerns about a solely outcome-based scheme.
- The **benefits of a PbR approach** identified include an increased awareness of the value of the public goods that participants can provide on their land holdings and an increased buy-in to delivering local priorities. Participants have indicated that on-farm **advice and guidance** has played a key role in developing land manager awareness and capability.
- There are also emerging findings from the PbR Natural England trial in the Yorkshire Dales that the outcomes achieved are greater than under activity-based agri-environment schemes.
- There is emerging evidence from PbR trials around the benefits of **farmer self-assessment** alongside defined validation assessments including: capability building, commitment to improve and, good levels of accuracy.

- However, more work is needed on developing and testing **best practice guidance and outcome indicators** across the range of public goods. The monitoring of environmental outcomes is currently out of scope for the Tests and Trials programme. However, a number of tests and trials are developing or applying outcome measures and indicators or considering how aspects of assurance scheme standards could support this, which could provide important case studies.
- There are some positive findings emerging on the use of **Reverse Auctions**, particularly where there is a clear outcome being sought that also encourages collaboration between land managers. For example, water quality through a catchment-scale approach. We are testing other outcomes, but findings are limited as yet.
- In addition, the role of **well-established and connected delivery partners** and allowing enough lead-in time to ‘warm up’ potential participants have been highlighted as success factors.
- Participant feedback from completed auctions indicated a positive experience. The **reduced bureaucracy** for farmers was highlighted and there are some early indications that reverse auctions could help to **engage farmers and land managers** that have not previously participated in agri-environment schemes.
- Innovative delivery mechanisms may **not be mutually exclusive approaches**. For example, reverse auctions can apply aspects of PbR by releasing payment once delivery is achieved. Reverse auctions could also provide **a mechanism for leveraging blended finance**, where local public and private organisations can see a benefit to investment. For example, water companies in improving water quality.

Cross-cutting issues and gaps

Some **cross-cutting findings** include the following:

- The tests and trials underway reported **significant engagement** from farmers and land managers, indicating a clear interest and commitment to be involved in the co-design of ELM. However, test and trials project leads have emphasised the time investment needed to explain ELM and promote the opportunity to engage in tests and trials.
- There is an emerging consensus that, whilst some of the core concepts are applicable across different scales, geographies, sectors and land-types, there **needs to be flexibility** in application.
- A number of tests and trials are reporting current **low levels of understanding** around key ELM concepts such as public goods and natural capital, so some simple guidance and awareness-raising activity may be beneficial. Conversely, feedback indicates an increased level of understanding after engagement with a test and trial.
- The importance of **facilitation, advice and guidance** is coming through strongly across all the themes, as is **capacity building**. Some of these may require greater support at early stages of ELM, or when new participants join, but could potentially be reduced as knowledge increases.
- Whilst facilitation is considered a key driver in establishing collaboration, there is a potential gap in understanding whether collaborative models can be sustained without continued facilitation.
- There is an interest in moving away from the restrictive, punitive approach to monitoring and enforcement and towards encouraging **self-assessment and continual improvement**. Questions are being raised around the intersection between innovation and regulations.

- Getting the **financial incentives** right will be a critical success factor in ensuring take-up of the scheme and commitment to continual improvement.

In terms of potential **gaps**, participants at the thematic working groups were keen to ensure that ELM design adequately considers the **needs of specific participants or groups** including tenant farmers and those managing common land. We would also like to continue to increase the number of farmer-led tests and trials.

Our learning to date has also highlighted some policy themes that we may wish to explore further through our tests and trials, including: **monitoring and compliance** approaches; outcome indicators for **self-assessment**, and; interaction with **industry approaches** such as assurance schemes, standards and sustainable farming score-cards.

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<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 24 th November 2020	<u>Item</u> 6
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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBS AND EUROPARC FEDERATION UPDATE

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
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Summary

This paper provides information on relevant recent activity of the National Association for AONBs and the Europarc Federation.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information provided, opportunities for involvement, and to adopt the NAAONB 'Art in the Landscape' Strategy.

Background - National Association for AONBs

Some particular recent activities of NAAONB include:

Glover review - providing data, evidence, and insight to inform discussion on forthcoming Government response to the Review. Advocating for the best outcome for AONBs and ensuring that decisions are made based on a sound understanding of how the AONB Family and the NAAONB operates.

Working differently and supporting collaboration between AONB teams. Conclusion of the Taking the Lead programme, and the development of a new collaborative programme of work, funded by AONB teams in England and co-ordinated by the NAAONB.

Nature recovery - with support of Natural England, NAAONB now employs a Nature Recovery Coordinator. This post will help provide the resource required centrally to support the delivery of the Colchester Declaration and engage productively with the National Park Authorities.

Advocating - for strengthening the duty of regard to the AONB purpose(s). Also supported an amendment to include reference to landscape in the Agriculture Bill. The purpose of this was to position the AONB and National Park management plans central to post-Brexit agricultural support mechanism and facilitate the targeting of support payments to help conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Environmental Land Management - Collective response through 'Farming for the Nation' - programme of Tests and Trials designed to inform ELMS. Also recently awarded a contract to

deliver an advocacy and training programme for designated landscape staff, working with AONB and National Park teams across England.

New audiences - currently supporting a national conversation to explore how we become more inclusive in the ways we operate.

Art in the Landscape - Following a successful bid to Arts Council England, supplemented with additional funding from individual AONBs, the NAAONB engaged the consultants Activate to prepare a National Arts Strategy in order to connect people to nature through arts and culture. A national training programme for AONB staff is under way (Joy Howells from our team is undertaking this training).

Individual AONB Partnerships are encouraged to adopt the NAAONB National Arts Strategy, and today's agenda item recommends that we do this. There are good links here with Shropshire's new Cultural Strategy <https://shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/vibrant-shropshire-cultural-strategy-2021-2031/>.

Collaborative work is also being undertaken with The Poetry School, co-ordinating across the AONB Family to support The Laurel and Ginkgo prizes for nature and environmental poetry.

Events – The National Conference, Lead Officer meetings, workshops, and the Chairmen's Conference have all necessarily been cancelled in 2020. While this has affected work and had financial consequences, it has provided an opportunity to reconsider events in the future, best use of online platforms, reducing carbon footprint and widening the potential audiences. NAAONB will soon be rolling out a carefully designed online platform for running interactive events online which will also be available to AONB Partnerships for use at the local level.

Leadership – NAAONB seeks to prepare the network to take an adaptive response, make sense of complexity and view uncertainty as opportunity rather than threat. A distributive leadership approach is favoured, which:

- enables rather than restricts
- is based on known uncertainty rather than a fallacious notion of certainty
- seeks to constantly make sense, rather than impose rigidity of vision
- creates space and confidence for leadership to emerge at any and all levels
- supports dynamic fluidity of leadership across the AONB Family and stakeholders
- differentiates leadership from collaboration and builds consent, not consensus
- mediates conflict and directs new common ground into active systems change.

Mechanisms for communication, sharing ideas, and sense-making must be opened wider to embrace the thoughts and feelings of stakeholders. This requirement should be built into our current work in engaging new audiences and promoting landscapes for everyone.

Devolution and the complexity associated with working within and across different national political and legislative frameworks is a challenge. A new grant to NAAONB is supporting the employment of a Wales Development Officer.

Background - Europarc Federation

The Europarc Federation has recently run webinars including:

- Healthy Parks Healthy People programme
- Climate change adaptation in Protected Areas – from theory to practice.
- Sustainable Tourism Management in the Post-Pandemic Reality
- Online Conference – Our New Future, How Ready Are We?

The Europarc Atlantic Isles section (UK & Ireland) has also organised webinars by Prof John Lawton on 'Making Space for Nature 10 years on', and on implementation of the Glover Review.

In the Europarc conference workshop on Sustainable Tourism the experience of the post coronavirus lockdown rush to parks and green spaces was discussed and it was recognised that Protected Areas provide an added value, important for health and wellbeing. Some suggestions of what protected areas need for the future based on this learning include:

- Creative and innovative thinking. We might encounter new crises and we need to think differently to deal with them.
- Social abilities: to meet and understand people and to avoid and solve potential conflict situations.
- Visitor knowledge and monitoring: need to know the visitors better, understand their behaviour, their needs and how to reach them – especially new audiences
- Services design thinking: in order to offer more sustainable services. It is important to know the "visitor's path": before, during and after the visit to the protected area, in order to guarantee sustainability.
- Visitor management plans: how to manage large numbers of people? (parking lots crowded, excess of people in sensitive areas, etc.) Need to apply new approaches.
- Effective communication. How to influence the behaviour of visitors effectively? How to deal with new audiences? How to make the most of this opportunity for encouraging new visitors? Use of IT for real time info /communication contents.
- Partnership working. With stakeholders, tourism enterprises, etc.

AONBs are in a category of areas known in Europarc as Nature Regional Landscape Parks. In other countries as in the UK, these areas tend to be secondary to National Parks and under-resourced, limiting their potential to deliver optimal benefits to society. Europarc has recently launched a position paper aiming to raise the profile of these areas, highlighting the key services they provide for nature, environment, society and a good quality of life, especially biological diversity, climate change, sustainable agriculture and food supply, sustainable socio-economic development of rural areas, sustainable tourism and recreation, environmental education, health and wellbeing, innovation for sustainable development.

These areas exemplify a dynamic-innovation approach, known as an 'integration approach', in which cooperation among various stakeholders is a key element, and the protected area is perceived as part of a living socio-ecological landscape rather than being isolated space. Their focus is the interests of both nature and humans.

This reinforces the UK directions through the Glover Review to strengthen AONBs.

List of Background Papers

NAAONB AGM papers 19 November 2020

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/6216/0500/1777/NAAONB_AGM_Papers_No_v_20.pdf

NAAONB National Art in the Landscape Strategy

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/2116/0318/0964/Art_in_the_Landscape_-_Final_Report.pdf

Europarc Position Paper - Nature Regional Landscape Parks - Where Policy meets Practice

https://www.europarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Policy-Paper_NRLPs_Final.pdf

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 topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Extracts from NAAONB Art in the Landscape strategy

Appendix 1 Extracts from NAAONB Art in the Landscape strategy

ART IN THE LANDSCAPE - connecting people to nature through arts and culture

VISION

People experience a deeper connection to the natural beauty of the landscape through the arts.

STRATEGY AIMS

1. To connect people to nature and the natural beauty of the AONBs – increasing creativity, wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour.
2. To challenge perceptions of access to the landscape in order to diversify engagement.
3. To broker new trusted relationships with the arts and cultural sector to cocreate new programmes.
4. To celebrate the existing creativity in the AONB teams and the local community.
5. To work with arts and culture to understand and directly address the climate emergency and nature recovery.
6. To welcome provocations and questions in exploring ways that arts can change perceptions.
7. To inspire ambition by sharing exemplary projects of all scales.
8. To capture the public's imagination through engaging them in creative responses to the landscape.
9. To raise the profile of the landscape and the AONBs and the purpose of the AONB teams.
10. To lever in resources and relationships at all levels for an ambitious programme.

Extract on Connectedness to Nature

Nature Connectedness is a measurable psychological construct that moves beyond contact with nature to an individual's sense of their relationship with the natural world, championed by Miles Richardson, University of Derby. (<https://www.derby.ac.uk/research/centres-groups/nature-connectedness-research-group/>).

"Rather than a focus on learning, there should be a focus on creating art, poetry and music – through noticing nature, its beauty and telling the story of the meaning and feelings it brings. Rather than a focus on learning the history, help nurture and enhance the present – caring for nature is a pathway to connection. Create a new culture of celebrating our place in nature."

Miles Richardson Blog.

A new Nature Connection Index (NCI) has demonstrated that if people assess themselves as 76% or greater connected to nature, they are far more likely to be active in their concern for landscape and resultant increase in well-being. Nature connection can be developed by focusing on five types of activity:

- tuning our senses,
- responding with our emotions,
- appreciating beauty,
- celebrating meaning, and
- activating our compassion for nature.

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<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 24 th November 2020	<u>Item</u> 7
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AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT, GREEN RECOVERY CHALLENGE FUND BIDS AND PARTNER ACTIVITY

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
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Summary

This agenda item provides an opportunity for partner updates on activity.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information provided and contribute as appropriate.

Background

Management Plan

The five year AONB Management Plan sets out actions which are delivered by a wide range of partners. In many cases this includes things which partners are already doing, while in some cases the Plan seeks new or extended activity or better co-ordination, to benefit the AONB. A first progress update on the current Management Plan has been prepared and is given at Appendix 1. If any members wish to add to or amend this progress update, information will be gratefully received, and then the update will be published.

Green Recovery Challenge Fund

In September and October bids were invited to the Government's £40m Green Recovery Challenge Fund managed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It is understood that bids have far exceeded the available funding – being at least 7 times oversubscribed. Some applicants have recently been told they have been unsuccessful. The one stage application process for grants of less than £250k is ahead in time of the two stage process for larger grants. The NAAONB's expression of interest for a nature recovery project involving an officer for each AONB team was unfortunately not successful. Bids for projects operating within the AONB of which we are aware that have not yet been decided include:

- Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership bid on peatlands, working with Shropshire Wildlife Trust
- National Trust bid for Stepping Stones project
- Shropshire Wildlife Trust bid for work on Trust nature reserves.

If there are any other bids still current within the AONB which members are aware of, it would be useful to share information on these.

The timescale for delivery of the projects under this fund is up to 31st March 2022.

Partner updates

Verbal partner updates can be given at the meeting as time allows. If members wish to give an update it would be helpful to know this in advance.

List of Background Papers None
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 topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
Appendices Appendix 1 Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan Actions Progress Report October 2020

Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24 Actions

Ref	Action	Type	Lead & partners	Progress at October 2020
LM - Land Management Supporting Landscape and Natural Beauty				
LM1	Work with Defra, NAAONB and local partners to ensure new Environmental Land Management Schemes deliver Management Plan priorities in the AONB	New action	AP, NE, NT, SWT, NFU, CLA	A number of Defra ELM tests/trials are going on in the AONB, including led by the National Trust (Stepping Stones area, on whole farm plans), by NFU, Soil Association and by private landowners. There is a need to share learning and define among partners the local environmental priorities for the AONB from the scheme. The AONB team have some funding from Defra and NAAONB for ELM advocacy work with farmers.
LM2	Develop further web-based guidance material for land managers – about landscape features and about utilising environmental assets sustainably	Aspiration	AP	Some material has been made available in follow-up to a community Environment & Climate Emergency event in Feb 2020. There is a need to disseminate local guidance especially on tree establishment to ensure best integration and benefits to the AONB landscape. A web page on the AONB website is in preparation.
LM3	Implement ' Our Common Cause ' upland commons project with local and national partners (subject to delivery phase approval)	In progress	AP, FCL, NT, NE	The Stage 2 NLHF funding application was successful, and the Delivery phase will begin in autumn 2020, staff recruitment is currently under way. The AONB team convenes the project Area Group.
LM4	Develop the Stepping Stones project into a long-term delivery initiative for the Long Mynd – Stiperstones area.	In progress	NT, AP, NE, SWT	Stepping Stones has been supported at the highest level in the National Trust as a long term partnership initiative. Current activity includes the Defra Test & Trial on Whole Farm Plans working with the Upper Onny Farmers group, a year of support for community activity funded by People's Postcode Lottery, and a study of farm based tourism in the area. A bid to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund has been made.
LM5	Continue to improve habitat and water quality in the River Clun for Freshwater pearl mussel	Ongoing	AP, EA, NE, SRT	Study commissioned by EA for Judicial Review concluded that major land use changes were needed in the catchment to achieve good status. Co-ordinated action by agencies continues. AONB team delivering two years of contracted delivery for Environment Agency 'Unmuddying the Waters' project, with biodiversity focus.
LM6	Co-ordinate catchment management through the Teme Partnership and Clun Catchment Partnership	Ongoing	SRT, AP & partners	The Teme Partnership and Clun Catchment Partnership both continue to operate and meet, providing a valuable collaboration and co-ordination mechanism.
LM7	Work with landowners through the Water Environment Grant .	New action	AP, SRT	Teme - Onny - Clun WEG project is now in year 2 with 3 farm advisers undertaking farm water management plans. Project was temporarily suspended during Covid-19 restrictions in summer 2020. Another WEG project is active in the Rea catchment in the north of the AONB.
LM8	Establish a large programme of establishing new trees outside woodlands , partly to help offset losses from Ash dieback disease	New action	AP, WT & partners	NLHF have agreed an expression of interest for a full application for a Linking Landscapes (Trees Outside Woods) project. This is currently being developed by the AONB team with partners. Relevant NLHF programmes are currently not open for application. Shropshire Council have secured some Defra funding for Trees Outside Woods, to focus on agro-forestry and orchards.
LM9	Support well planned woodland creation to enhance landscape, biodiversity and resource protection	Ongoing	FC, WT	Forestry Commission continue to provide grants for large scale schemes. AONB team acts as a local agent for Woodland Trust MOREwoods scheme. Surge of interest in community tree planting schemes and need to identify suitable land and provision of advice and support. Multi-partner Marches woodland creation event held January 2020 to share best practice.
LM10	Develop an Upper Teme project – including expanding tree and woodland cover and enhancing the river SSSI	Aspiration	AP, NE, SRT, EA, NRW	This is an element within the planned Linking Landscapes project.
LM11	Develop a ' Monumental Volunteers ' project for management of historic sites	New action	AP, HE	A good deal of work has been done on this, but there is a need to align priorities of different partners and funders, and then to complete a project funding application. Other projects are currently taking a higher priority.
LM12	Work with landowners on restorative management of Plantations on Ancient Woodland sites (PAWS)	New action	AP, WT, FC	Potential new project still of interest, not progressed so far.
LM13	Develop a social forestry project with funded officer capacity, and a hub linking service providers and users	Aspiration	AP and partners	This remains an aspiration. A variety of community-led activity continues around the AONB.
LM14	Support management of trees and woodlands along with natural flood management in the Wenlock Edge area , and look at potential for an integrated area project	New action	NT, SWT, AP, NE, FC	Active 'Slow the Flow' projects around the Corve Dale and elsewhere. Wenlock Edge is one proposed target area in the developing 'Linking Landscapes' project.
LM15	Support actions to manage hay meadows, and species-rich grassland	Ongoing	AP, SWT, NE	The Marches Meadows Group provides support to individuals. A number of conservation organisations are active in meadow and grassland management e.g. Natural England at the Stiperstones, National Trust new meadows at Jinlye.
LM16	Expand and support community projects managing road verges for biodiversity	Ongoing	AP, SWT, SC	Local projects on road verges are increasing - Edgton featured in national Plantlife publication, Little Stretton and All Stretton projects also supported by AONB Conservation Fund. NLHF funded partnership project (RSVP) led by Caring for God's Acre charity.
LM17	Support continued understanding of the geology of the AONB and the conservation and management of geological and geomorphological sites	Ongoing	SGS, NE, AP	Individual organisations continue activity but little specific project work at present.
LM18	Promote training for land management and conservation, and seek to address gaps in provision where identified	Ongoing	AP, NE, NT, HE	A mixture of opportunities are available. A structured review of needs and provision would be valuable.

LM1	Work with Defra, NAAONB and local partners to ensure new Environmental Land Management Schemes deliver Management Plan priorities in the AONB	New action	AP, NE, NT, SWT, NFU, CLA	A number of Defra ELM tests/trials are going on in the AONB, including led by the National Trust (Stepping Stones area, on whole farm plans), by NFU, Soil Association and by private landowners. There is a need to share learning and define among partners the local environmental priorities for the AONB from the scheme. The AONB team have some funding from Defra and NAAONB for ELM advocacy work with farmers.
LM19	Work with landowners regarding management of county Wildlife Sites	Ongoing	SWT	This is now being taken forward mostly through work on Nature Recovery Networks. Given the importance of these sites, there is probably insufficient capacity for advice to landowners on their management.
LM20	Seek opportunities to improve co-ordination of farm and conservation advice , and address gaps if possible	Ongoing	NE, AP, SWT	NFU's ELM test/trial is focussed on this. Stepping Stones test/trial has also looked at the role of advisers in relation to Whole Farm Plans.
LM21	Continue network of Shropshire Hills Uplands Forum linking with national Uplands Alliance	Ongoing	AP and partners	The Uplands Forum has not been repeated, but links are maintained with the national Uplands Alliance.
LM22	Collate environmental data relevant to the AONB	Ongoing	AP, NE, SC	Some action but this task requires better resourcing to optimise effectiveness.
LM23	Complete a Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB and take action towards Colchester Declaration targets for nature recovery.	New action	AP, EA, NE, SWT	Initial research, scoping and mapping carried out.
LM24	Scope and develop a new project on Shropshire Hills AONB peatlands (an under-recognised resource of mainly shallow and pocketed peat)	New action	AP, EA, NE, NT, SWT	Initial scoping carried out early 2020 and phase 1 funding bid submitted.

PL - Planning for a Sustainable Economy and Communities

PL1	Press for stronger status for AONB structures as a statutory consultee in planning and the necessary resources to fulfil duties which go with this	Aspiration	AP, NAAP, NE, LAs	Case made through AONB Partnership input to Glover Review. Continue to encourage where opportunities arise.
PL2	Expand capacity within the AONB team for work on planning consultations	New action	AP	Not achieved so far, and very challenging within existing resources. Specialist landscape support has been hired in for a key case - Ironbridge power station site redevelopment.
PL3	Develop Design Guidance and a checklist for domestic development	New action	AP, LAs	Some work done on a checklist. Intention to develop a project brief and scope when Nature Recovery Plan is completed.
PL4	Develop a Landscape Guidance document	New action	AP, LAs, NE	This is now going to be rolled in to the Nature Recovery Plan.
PL5	Continue to foster links and understanding between Partnership and planning officers and committee members	Ongoing	AP, LAs	AONB briefing session delivered to Shropshire Council Planning Committee members March 2020. Increased direct communication with planning officers.
PL6	Support activities contributing to a net zero Shropshire Hills for greenhouse gas emissions, compatible with the AONB's special qualities	Ongoing	AP, LAs	AONB Partnership session on Environment & Climate Emergency held Oct 2019 with recommendations made to the two Councils. Community event held Feb 2020 with 100 people attending. AONB Manager participating in Shropshire Council Climate Change officer group. Involvement at a variety of levels in Shropshire Climate Action Partnership and South Shropshire CLimate Action Group.
PL7	Monitor and report on planning applications in the AONB	Aspiration	LAs	Some analysis of application categories, outcomes and mapping has been undertaken.
PL8	Continue to foster stronger links with other relevant planning consultees – including Natural England, CPRE and other Council departments	Ongoing	AP	This has happened in some cases, but relatively little input to planning casework has been made recently for capacity reasons.
PL9	Support new Community Led Plans to take the AONB fully into account	Ongoing	AP	Some support provided and ongoing to Church Stretton CLP process.
PL10	Make the case for an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights for motorsports in the AONB	New action	AP	Active discussion on this in 2019, which needs further follow up.
PL11	Develop guidance on management and design of roads in the AONB	Aspiration	AP, LAs	No action.
PL12	Undertake work to identify key viewpoints within the AONB, and looking into it from surrounding areas	Aspiration	AP and partners	No action.
PL13	Demonstrate value of landscape to the economy through tourism	Ongoing/Aspiration	AP, LAs	This case is made wherever possible, but would benefit from better data and evidence, and a more structured approach.

EC- People Enjoying and Caring About the Landscape

EC1	Implement new 3 year Young Rangers project incorporating the John Muir Award	New action	AP and partners	Project funding application submitted Oct 2019 and successful. Project starting late autumn 2020, first activities in early 2021.
EC2	Actively engage partners to develop the role and influence of the Destination Partnership , especially to oversee implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy	Ongoing	AP, SHT and partners	The Destination Partnership continues to function, with varied attendance, but proven need in relation to Covid-19 recovery. Active engagement of Shropshire Hills partners with redevelopment of a Shropshire DMO.
EC3	Promote less well known locations in the AONB in order to disperse visitors , spreading both the load and benefits	Ongoing	SHT and partners	Walking and 50 hills pages of AONB website have been popular in 2020, along with Shropshire's Great Outdoors website with many options for walks and activities. Dispersal especially relevant in post-lockdown situation, with honeypot sites under acute pressure, but many less known locations have very limited infrastructure.
EC4	Publicise the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and use it as tool for engagement, including possible Charter Part II with businesses	Ongoing	AP, SHT and partners	The Charter and sustainable tourism principles have been highlighted in work with the Councils, DMOs and businesses. Some interest from businesses in Charter Part II scheme but not progressed so far.
EC5	Continue to operate Shropshire Hills Shuttles , seeking new funding and refining service	Ongoing	AP, SC, NT	Successful 2019 season but funding becoming more challenging. A reduced service was planned for 2020 but this was suspended due to Covid-19 restrictions, with a Park & Ride service in Church Stretton being operated instead. Future funding now even more uncertain.

LM1	Work with Defra, NAAONB and local partners to ensure new Environmental Land Management Schemes deliver Management Plan priorities in the AONB	New action	AP, NE, NT, SWT, NFU, CLA	A number of Defra ELM tests/trials are going on in the AONB, including led by the National Trust (Stepping Stones area, on whole farm plans), by NFU, Soil Association and by private landowners. There is a need to share learning and define among partners the local environmental priorities for the AONB from the scheme. The AONB team have some funding from Defra and NAAONB for ELM advocacy work with farmers.
EC6	Establish a new sustainable tourism business network for the Shropshire Hills	New action	AP, SHT	Some discussions with partners.
EC7	Support visitor centres – Cardingmill Valley, Discovery Centre, Bog Centre, Acton Scott, Much Wenlock, Bishop’s Castle Town Hall	Ongoing	SHT, AP, LAs	Run by a variety of organisations including community groups. Many centres are now multi-functional, as visitor centres alone may be no longer viable. Still an important resource despite increase in use of online information.
EC8	Maintain rights of way and promoted walking routes to a good standard, especially prime routes such as Offa’s Dyke Path and the Shropshire Way	Ongoing	LAs	Council management of rights of way and promoted routes is carried out as well as possible with resources available, but funding is a serious limitation, especially for capital projects (e.g. bridges and major repairs, flood damage etc)
EC9	Support places within the AONB to develop and promote their walking offer	Ongoing	LAs, AP	The main towns in and around the AONB have worked hard on their walking offer. Routes, promotion etc need to be kept up to date and renewed.
EC10	Continue volunteering support for Parish Paths groups and Volunteer Rangers	Ongoing	LAs	P3 groups continue to be active and supported. Potential for a better network of volunteer rangers if adequate professional support could be given.
EC11	Improve provision and promotion for cycling of different kinds and levels	Ongoing	LAs, AP and partners	A range of opportunities are publicised by different organisations. Also a high degree of user-generated on-line routes. Would benefit from a structured review and gap filling exercise. Significant potential for capital investment into more off-road cycle routes, but considerable background feasibility work is needed.
EC12	Pursue ‘ Caering for Caradoc ’ fund-raising appeal and explore possibilities to replicate this, perhaps at the Wrekin	In progress	AP & Trust	‘Fix the Fort’ appeal operated through 2019 and over £2,500 raised. First tranche of practical work able to go ahead subject to Covid-19 restrictions.
EC13	Repeat five yearly visitor survey	New action	AP, SHT	Local visitor survey carried out in Church Stretton in summer 2020.
EC14	Continue to link Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre with AONB landscape and as an orientation centre for visitors to the area	Ongoing	GCL	The Discovery Centre has progressed well under the management of the social enterprise ‘Grow Cook Learn’. Closure due to Covid-19 restrictions in 2020 poses major challenges.
EC15	Promote the area’s best qualities to the business community and encourage an ‘ambassador’ approach	New action	AP, SHT	No specific action so far.
EC16	Expand membership of Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB	Ongoing	AP & Trust	Recruitment efforts have drawn new members and increased income considerably, though overall net numbers have only increased slightly. Suspension of public events in 2020 has slowed momentum.
EC17	Develop and promote a varied programme of events and optimise relevance to the AONB	Ongoing	All	A wide variety of countryside events are provided by many organisations, and publicised on the AONB website and elsewhere. Covid-19 restrictions during 2020 have halted almost all of these.
EC18	Develop the annual leaflet swap event into a sustainable tourism conference	New action	SHT, AP	Successful Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Expo held April 2019. 2020 planned event cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions. Shropshire Hills Tourism is undergoing change in committee personnel, with some reduction in activity.
EC19	Seek to develop conservation holidays involving practical volunteering	Aspiration	NT, SWT?	Some discussions with partners.
EC20	Improve roadside signage marking AONB at entry points	New action	AP, LAs	No action so far.
EC21	Foster links with the Shrewsbury University Centre and other HE and FE institutions	New action	AP	Some connections formed. Would benefit from further structured activity.
EC22	Improve links with Duke of Edinburgh Award and other outdoor activity providers to raise awareness of the AONB	New action	AP and partners	Attendance at regional DofE conference. Potential for further contact with provider groups.
EC23	Demonstrate value of landscape to health and wellbeing	Aspiration	AP, LAs	This case is made wherever possible, but would benefit from better data and evidence, and a more structured approach.
EC24	Develop an interpretation plan for the AONB	Aspiration	AP & partners	No action so far.

Organisations listed in Actions tables

AP	Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership	NRW	Natural Resources Wales
CLA	Country Land & Business Association	NT	National Trust
EA	Environment Agency	SC	Shropshire Council
FC	Forestry Commission	SGS	Shropshire Geological Society
FCL	Foundation for Common Land	SHT	Shropshire Hills Tourism
GCL	Grow Cook Learn	SRT	Severn Rivers Trust
HE	Historic England	SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
LAs	Local Authorities	Trust	Shropshire Hills AONB Trust
NE	Natural England	WT	Woodland Trust
NFU	National Farmers Union		

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<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 24 th November 2020	<u>Item</u> 8
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SHROPSHIRE COMMUNITY AND RURAL STRATEGY CONSULTATION

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Summary

This paper highlights to members the current consultation on a Community and Rural Strategy for Shropshire, which runs till 6th December 2020.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the information provided.

Background

The development of a Community and Rural Strategy for Shropshire sets out to realise local policy intentions and to reflect Government policy and strategy, including the Industrial Strategy, the Clean Growth Strategy and the 25 Year Environment Plan. The first element of the strategy is based around developing evidence based shared priorities for Shropshire as a whole, that are also relevant and recognisable to local communities. The second looks at how these can be implemented across the County and providing the framework for their delivery at a Shropshire Council area level and through action and delivery within and by local areas.

The Shared Priorities identified in the draft strategy are as follows:

Vision: Sustainable Shropshire communities through local action

Aim: Shropshire; a great place to live, work, visit and play for everyone

Shared priorities:

- Keeping everyone happy and healthy, whatever their age
- Helping people who are lonely to connect with others and enjoy themselves
- Finding effective and sustainable ways to move people around
- Embracing the skills and experience of our older generation
- Making sure we have the right homes in the right places
- Attracting and keeping young people in the county and developing a skilled workforce
- Continuously improving physical and digital connectivity
- Reducing our impact on the climate, nature and the wider environment

List of Background Papers

Draft Shropshire Community and Rural Strategy, Collaborate, change together and achieve, September 2020 <https://shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/community-and-rural-strategy-2020/>.

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 topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

None