

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

Date: Monday, 4 July 2022

**Committee:**  
**Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership**

**Date:** Tuesday, 12 July 2022  
**Time:** 9.30 am  
**Venue:** Norbury Village Hall, Norbury, Nr Bishops Castle

You are requested to attend the above meeting.

The Agenda is attached

Tim Collard  
Assistant Director – Legal and Governance

**Members of Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership**

Alex Carson-Taylor (Chairman)	Steve Pennington
Hilary Clayton-Smith (Vice Chairman)	Wayne Barnes
Cecilia Motley (Vice Chairman)	Gillian Binks
Heather Kidd	Jim Bunce
Hilary Luff	Sarah Bury
Dan Morris	Pete Carty
Chris Turley	Janet Cobb
Alison Caffyn	Veronica Cossons
George Chancellor	Charles Edwards
Adrian Cullis	Rhona Goddard
Gillian Preece	Carol Griffiths
Fiona Williams	Robert Harris
Andrew Wood	Alan Jones
John Luck	Bill Klemperer
Ruth Houghton	Sue Lee
Mark Hughes	Hazel MacDowell
John Long	Leo Smith
David Mills	

Your Committee Officer is:

**Tim Ward** Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 257713

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

# AGENDA

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

To receive apologies for absence

## **2 Minutes of the last meeting (Pages 1 - 4)**

The note of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 is attached for confirmation

## **3 Climate Change action in the Shropshire Hills (Pages 5 - 10)**

This main item for the meeting will include a number of presentation and discussion sessions including on National Association for AONBs collaborative work, Shropshire Council, and South Shropshire Climate Action, plus break out workshop sessions on: Land, agriculture and nature-based solutions; Planning (including renewable energy); Tourism and transport.

## **4 Implementation of the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes - update (Pages 11 - 12)**

This paper provides members an update on government and NAAONB activity around implementation of the Landscapes Review.

## **5 Likely one year delay to AONB Management Plan review (Pages 13 - 14)**

This paper informs members of a likely national move to delay the review of the AONB Management Plans by a year in order to align better with strategic plans and programmes at a national level.

## **6 AONB Team - Work Programme Update (Pages 15 - 22)**

This paper provides members with an update of recent work by the AONB Team.

## **7 Date of Next Meeting**

Members are reminded that the next meeting of the Partnership will be held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 9.30am

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Shropshire Hills  
AONB Partnership

12 July 2022

9.30 am

## **MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP MEETING HELD ON 22 MARCH 2022 9.30 - 11.40 AM**

**Responsible Officer:** Tim Ward

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk      Tel: 01743 257713

### **Present**

Alex Carson-Taylor (Chair) Hilary Claytonsmith (Vice Chairman), Cecilia Motley (Vice Chairman), Heather Kidd, Hilary Luff, Chris Turley, Alison Caffyn, Gillian Preece, John Luck, Ruth Houghton, Mark Hughes, David Mills, Steve Pennington, Sarah Bury, Charles Edwards, Robert Harris, Sue Lee, Richard Grindle and Alison MacDonald.

### **51 Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

51.1 The Chairman welcomed Richard Grindle to his first meeting of the Partnership.

51.2 Apologies for absence were received from Gill Binks, Janet Cobb, Veronica Cossons, Adrian Cullis, John Long, Dan Morris, Leo Smith, Fiona Williams and Pete Banford.

### **52 Minutes of the last meeting**

52.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021 had been circulated.

#### **52.2 RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership held on 19 October 2021 be approved as a true record.

### **53 Government response to the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes**

53.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which provided them with a draft submission, for comment and approval, to the government's consultation on its response to the Landscapes Review.

53.2 The AONB Manager advised members that the government's response to the review had been published in January, and that the NAAONB had been running a number of groups to formulate its response to the consultation. He went on to advise members that the draft Partnership response was closely aligned to the

NAAONB position and recommended to members that they support the draft response.

53.3 Several members commented that the AONB Partnership's role in the planning process was important and supported the proposal to make AONB organisations statutory consultees and that the necessary extra resource should be found for this.

53.4 Several members commented that whilst they welcomed the increase in people using the AONB for recreation and enjoyment, this should be properly managed, and the necessary resource and infrastructure should be in place. It was suggested that voluntary rangers could be used to assist visitors and help prevent problems.

53.5 **RESOLVED:**

That the Partnership is approve the draft Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership submission, subject to the comments made at the meeting.

54 **Farming in Protected Landscapes programme update**

54.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which updated them on progress with the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme in the Shropshire Hills AONB.

54.2 The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that to date 16 projects had been awarded grants, with 2 more projects currently being finalised. He informed members that some of the funding allocated for year 1 had been reprofiled to years 2 and 3, and that the small underspend on year 1 had been returned to DEFRA for reallocation.

54.3 There was discussion about levels of uptake of the programme and its attractiveness to farmers. Members were reminded that the structure and rules of the programme are set down by DEFRA, and the team were being active in promotion and support activity. It was being found however that many farmers did not feel in a position to bring forward projects or found the work involved in doing this off-putting.

54.5 Members made suggestions and offered support with promotion and engagement for particular parts of the farming community.

54.5 **RESOLVED:**

That the Partnership note progress with the programme and consider how they as members and their organisations can help support good uptake and applications.

55 **NAAONB Historic Environment Statement**

55.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which put forward the NAAONB joint statement on historic environment for endorsement by the AONB Partnership.

55.2 Members were advised that the purpose of the statement was to maintain and raise the profile of historic environment work in AONBs.

55.3 Members welcomed the statement.

55.4 **RESOLVED:**

That the Partnership endorse the NAAONB Joint Statement on Historic Environment.

## 56 Shropshire Good Food Charter

56.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which put forward the Shropshire Good Food Charter for sign-up by the AONB Partnership.

56.2 Members were advised that the Charter was an initiative of the Shropshire Good Food Partnership which was formed in 2021 with a vision “for regenerative food, farming and land-use systems” and a mission is “to bring people together to create a local food system which is good for people, place and the planet”.

56.3 Members welcomed the Charter and commented that its ethos fitted with that of the Partnership.

56.4 The AONB Partnership Manager commented that members of the Partnership may wish to consider signing up to the Charter themselves.

56.5 **RESOLVED**

That the Partnership sign up to the Good Food Charter in order to provide support for sustainable land management.

## 57 Ash Dieback Position Statement

57.1 Members received the report of the Natural Environment Officer which set out a draft position statement on Ash dieback for comment and approval.

57.2 The meeting was advised that the purpose of the statement was to highlight particular issues and sources of guidance and discourage an over-zealous response to felling in the disease, which would result in a faster loss of trees, including potentially healthy or disease resistant trees.

57.3 Members felt that the approach taken was a sensible one and it was **RESOLVED**

That the Partnership approve the position statement on Ash Dieback.

## 58 Shropshire Draft Destination Management Plan 2022-2025

58.1 Members received the report of the AONB Partnership Manager which updated Members on the draft Shropshire Destination Management Plan which had recently been prepared by consultants following stakeholder consultations.

58.2 Members welcomed the plan which supported AONB purposes through the adoption of sustainable tourism principles throughout the plan.

**58.3 RESOLVED**

That the Partnership note the production of the draft Plan and the summary contained in the report.

**59 Progress with Shropshire Local Plan Examination**

59.1 The AONB Partnership Manager advised the meeting that the draft Local Plan was at Examination stage, and while the Partnership had not requested to give evidence at hearings, he had offered that a Partnership view on topics relating to the AONB could be provided if requested by the Inspector. He informed members that he had recently raised again with Council officers the issue of setting of the AONB, following inclusion of this in the revised National Planning Policy Framework, but they did not however intend to propose an amendment to the Plan on this. A member commented that this was an important issue which should be picked up by the Local Plan.

**60 Shropshire Hills AONB Trust Fundraising**

60.1 Charles Edwards, Trustee updated the meeting on the work of the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust. He advised the meeting that the Trustees were looking at ways of expanding income to enable more grants to be awarded through the Conservation Fund. He informed members that the Trustees were working up a new Business Supporters scheme which local businesses could join in order to support local projects, and that Trustees would be meeting in April to finalise the details. He asked members to feed in details of any businesses that may be interested.

**61 Partner activity**

61.1 Alison Caffyn gave a short presentation on her work with the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, especially on a pilot land use framework.

**62 Dates of Future Meetings**

62.1 Members were advised that future meetings of the Partnership will be held on: -

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and  
Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022

All meetings at 9.30am

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date:





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## CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION IN THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS

**Responsible Officer** Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager  
e-mail: [phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01743 254741

### Summary

This paper provides the structure and background to this main agenda item for the meeting, which will include a number of presentation and discussion sessions as well as break-out workshops.

### Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the background information, to consider the issues and action priorities, and to participate in the discussion and workshop sessions.

### Background

This agenda item will occupy the majority of the meeting and is intended to engage Partnership members and other key stakeholders through:

- looking at a variety of current activity related to climate change both within the area and within the strategic context of AONBs
- examining some of the issues in relation to climate change and the Shropshire Hills
- helping to identify actions and priorities for both the AONB Partnership and partners.

Climate change is a systemic and complex issue, requiring a holistic response. 'Focusing' on climate change should not lead us to ignore other critical environmental parameters. In October 2019 the Partnership made clear recommendations to the Councils that climate change should be looked at alongside and integrally with nature recovery. This is now becoming more widely accepted. The need also to integrate more closely actions for climate change mitigation and for adaptation is now better understood.

The elements which will provide the structure for this agenda item are set out below, with some background information which should help to stimulate ideas and discussion.

#### National Association for AONBs collaborative programme and Chairs' Statement

The NAAONB has been running a collaborative programme on climate change for around 18 months involving small working groups and wider engagement through the Lead Officers meetings and national conference. A Statement of commitment on Climate Change from AONB Chairs was recently agreed (this was shared with Partnership members at a draft stage)

and is now being signed by Chairs around the country. Alex Carson-Taylor our Chair was involved in the small group drawing this up, and with the Partnership's support, will sign the Statement publicly at the meeting. The Statement is included as appendix 1 to this paper, and contains various pledges and commitments as well as further information on the NAAONB collaborative programme. The Framework and Toolkit and supporting documents will be circulated separately to members and those attending the meeting.

Phil Holden the AONB Manager has been part of the central collaboration group and has facilitated the topic group on nature-based solutions. He will talk briefly about this work including the recent Framework and Toolkit developed, and about a carbon audit of soils and vegetation in all English AONBs which NAAONB commissioned from Cranfield University which is currently being finalised. Nigel McDonald from the AONB team has been active in the Sustainable Tourism & Transport topic group.

### Local authorities

Shropshire Council – Cllr Ian Nellins, portfolio holder for Climate Change, Natural Assets & The Green Economy will be attending the meeting, along with Adrian Cooper the Climate Change Task Force Manager. There will be updates on relevant areas – e.g. renewable energy, EV charging, land management, trees, etc. and the opportunity for discussion.

Telford & Wrekin Council was recently ranked in the top 3% of 409 UK councils tackling climate change (<https://newsroom.telford.gov.uk/News/Details/16129>) and we hope to have relevant representatives to discuss their activity, especially with relevance to the AONB.

South Shropshire Climate Action have recently appointed Nick Read and Fiona Morgan to a job-share Project Co-ordinator role (funded by an anonymous donor), so will be significantly ramping up their activity. Following extensive stakeholder involvement through several conferences, South Shropshire Climate Action produced a Climate Action Plan for South Shropshire (the Ludlow parliamentary constituency). A number of topic groups have identified priority actions and are pursuing them. The AONB team have been closely involved, especially in the Land & Biodiversity group. South Shropshire Climate Action is closely linked to the Shropshire Climate Action Partnership (also known as Zero Carbon Shropshire).

For further information see <https://southshropshireclimateaction.org/>.

### Break-out sessions

To enable greater participation, we will break into topic workshop sessions in three groups, looking at:

- Land, agriculture and nature-based solutions
- Planning including renewable energy
- Tourism and transport

The purpose of these break-outs will be broadly to share further information on what is currently going on in the Shropshire Hills on this topic, and establish future priorities and next stage actions are, and who might deliver these. Further details will be set out at the meeting.

Towards a Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership Climate Action Plan

This is one of the commitments in the Chairs’ Statement, and some of the output of the day will feed into a draft plan for completion later this year. This will focus on actions that can be taken by the AONB Partnership (both the Partnership committee and the staff team) and won’t try to be a blueprint plan for the whole area. It will however address priorities facing the area in the context of what the Partnership can act on and influence. A strength of the Partnership is that member organisations have their own work programmes, which lie beyond the scope of this Plan, but will add up to considerable activity.

The five NAAONB workstreams will provide a useful structure for the Plan, enabling us to identify ambitious, tangible climate action across these adapted to our local area:

- Agriculture
- Nature-based Solutions
- Building Design and Planning
- Renewable Energy
- Sustainable Tourism and Transport

The priorities for this action plan will briefly be discussed to close the agenda item, with opportunities for further input by Partnership members.

<p><b>List of Background Papers</b>  NAAONB Climate Action in AONBs Framework and Toolkit, with supporting documents – Nature Based Solutions Supplementary Document, Farm Carbon Tools Guidance, How to Get Started for Farmers, Retrofitting Guidance (these will be circulated separately to members).</p>
<p><b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b>  The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.</p>
<p><b>Environmental Appraisal</b>  The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.</p>
<p><b>Risk Management Appraisal</b>  Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.</p>
<p><b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b>  The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.</p>
<p><b>Appendices</b>  Appendix 1 Statement of commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action</p>

# Statement of commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated for the precious landscapes they enfold. As such they must make an important contribution to face climate change and its consequences. **AONB teams and partnerships must now more than ever confirm their leading role and ambition in addressing this challenge.**

Climate change mitigation and adaptation will **in part** be delivered by AONB teams, but they are small and cannot do everything. AONB partnerships bring many stakeholders together and this capacity must be harnessed. These stakeholders also extend their reach and activities beyond AONB partnerships thus multiplying this capacity and placing AONBs as **catalysts and trusted partners**. In parallel, AONB teams and partnerships must continue to support **land managers and communities** within AONBs to take their own action.

Rising to this challenge means **working collaboratively** across the national Family of AONB teams, their partners, and their communities, using the AONB designation to influence relevant stakeholders. This ambition will only be achieved if AONBs are supported both in terms of **funding and policy changes** to the levels recommended by the **Landscapes Review**.

This statement of commitment from AONB chairs is the evidence that **AONBs teams and partnerships are ready to act** but it is also a **call for more support** to help them achieve their ambition.

## Context

Through 2021 a subset of AONB staff from across the country, with the support from the National Association for AONBs, has come together to create and take forward a **collaborative climate change action programme** (hereafter ‘the Collaborative Programme’) aiming to:

1. **Develop a greater, data-based understanding** of climate change and its impacts on AONBs and people, **enabling decision and action**;
2. **Generate a strong evidence base** for an AONB offer and narrative on the inter-connected climate and ecological emergencies;
3. **Generate tangible outputs** at a national and local level.

This Collaborative Programme brings focus on **five workstreams** to enhance the AONB teams’ and partnerships’ capacity to assess issues and deliver tangible solutions: **Agriculture, Nature-based Solutions, Building Design and Planning, Renewable Energy, Sustainable Tourism and Transport**. They are described in the **Climate Action Framework and Toolkit**.

This Collaborative Programme directly supports the pledge set out in the [Colchester Declaration](#): ‘by 2024, to ensure all AONB Management Plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero’.

The Collaborative Programme also acknowledges that it must carefully **align with the 25-Year Environment Plan** and **other relevant policies** developed by central government.

In November 2021 the National Association for AONBs signed the [Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity Crises](#), asserting the crucial role designated landscapes must play in relation to the connected challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Finally, since January 2022, [AONB teams are working to articulate what a 21<sup>st</sup> century landscape designation looks like](#) and how to get there, in the context of the ongoing consultation on the Government response to the Landscapes Review. **Climate change is a major challenge** of this start of the century and has to be highlighted as **a key priority for national landscapes**, here and now.

## Commitments

**We, as chairs** from AONB partnerships across England and Wales and in conjunction with our Lead Officers, **assert our support for the Climate Action Framework and Toolkit** emerging from the Collaborative Programme. We **reassert our support for the collaborative way of working** fostered by the National Association as a key mechanism to develop and deliver climate solutions urgently and at scale.

We abide by the global commitments set out in the Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement. We also acknowledge the imperative to **remain aligned with evolving national policies** connected to climate change issues.

As chairs we are **custodians of the AONB partnerships' power to convene** and are responsible for opening and maintaining space for debate and empowerment. **We support and encourage our Lead Officers and AONB teams to take action forward on climate change.**

We commit to:

- **Stimulate debate and generate engagement** across our partnerships for ambitious, tangible climate action across the five workstreams and adapted to our local areas,
- **Empower our partnerships** to explore their full potential in terms of climate action: what they can deliver directly and what they can influence,
- Each with our own capacity and ability and in alignment with emerging outputs from the Collaborative Programme, **support the creation of a collective, broad-level climate action plan** for all AONBs and **lead the development of a local action plan in our own AONB partnership** by the end of 2022.

To these ends, we will:

- **Bring climate action to our AONB partnerships as a top agenda item at our next partnership meeting and before the end of 2022,**
- **Promote and use the Climate Action Framework and Toolkit** and make it **immediately** accessible to partnership members, to enable them to take meaningful actions on climate change issues;
- **Facilitate ongoing conversations to include tangible climate action in AONB Management Plans** and associated business and delivery plans, in line with the present Statement, the Climate Action Framework and Toolkit and the Colchester Declaration;
- **Maintain awareness** of other parallel or relevant activities taking place in our local areas, co-ordinating with and supporting these as far as possible;
- **Support each other** in fulfilling these commitments through sharing learning and demonstrating collaborative behaviours across the AONB Family.

To support us in this process, the Collaboration Advisory Group leading on the Collaborative Programme commits to ensuring a mechanism is in place to provide information and a space for conversation and ongoing collaboration for AONB chairs.

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## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOVER REVIEW OF DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES - UPDATE**

**Responsible Officer** Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager  
e-mail: [phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01743 254741

### **Summary**

This paper provides members an update on government and NAAONB activity around implementation of the Landscapes Review.

### **Recommendation**

The Partnership is recommended to note and comment on the update.

### **Background**

We are now in the crucial delivery phase of the Glover Review, which will determine whether a 'once in a generation' step change actually comes about, or whether this will be seen as the time when the opportunity was missed. There are some encouraging signs about the steps government is taking (e.g. in relation to strengthened legal powers and purposes, continuing to look at defining minimum standards for governance for local authorities, etc), but significant progress on resourcing appears to be the main sticking point.

All English AONBs have recently received a 3 year financial settlement from Defra which provides a 14.7% increase in core funding for 2022-23 (over the base budget for 2021-22, and equating for us to an additional £29k), but followed then by a flat line of the same cash amount for the following two years. While the current year increase is welcome, the following two year freeze at a time of rising costs means that our ability to expand the team in a meaningful way is very constrained. Overall this settlement falls well short of the transformative change for AONBs envisioned by the Glover Review Panel.

The Defra Landscapes team have indicated their will to do as much as possible on resourcing. In the short term additional funds are likely to come in the form of 'project' money – Farming in Protected Landscapes is an example of this, and there is currently under discussion a possible allocation among AONB and National Park bodies of some funding for work focused on 'Access for All'.

NAAONB has ongoing discussions with Defra regarding implementation of the Landscapes Review and we have periodically the opportunity to feed into this, either through NAAONB or sometimes directly through Defra workshops. Active topics include governance and the proposed National Landscapes rebrand. NAAONB continue to push that the various AONB

measures taken together could be transformative and each proposal should not be seen in isolation. The rebrand should happen if it is to mark a significant new stage for AONBs, but should not be done just as a superficial exercise.

For the statutory changes (such as updated powers and purposes), there is a need to find legislative space to do this. The possibility of clauses within the current Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill is currently being considered, and if this is not possible opportunities within a later Bill will be looked at.

<b>List of Background Papers</b> Landscapes review (National Parks and AONBs): government response: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response</a> .
<b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b> The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
<b>Environmental Appraisal</b> The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
<b>Risk Management Appraisal</b> Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
<b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b> The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
<b>Appendices</b> <b>None</b>





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## LIKELY ONE YEAR DELAY TO AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

**Responsible Officer** Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager  
e-mail: [phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01743 254741

### Summary

This paper informs members of a likely national move to delay the review of the AONB Management Plans by a year in order to align better with strategic plans and programmes at a national level.

### Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to support the proposed delay, subject to confirmation from Defra of this opportunity.

### Background

Discussion at a national level has highlighted that there is merit in a delay to the production of AONB and National Park Management Plans which are due for review by March 2024 until there is greater certainty over matters like the proposed reforms arising from the Government's response to the Landscapes Review, the proposed Landscape Strategy, and the publication of refreshed Management Plan Guidance by Natural England.

Defra have recently stated the following:

"We are writing to inform you that Defra is exploring a proposal to offer some Management Planning Partnerships an option to delay the publication of upcoming Management Plans.

Defra has already begun work to implement non-legislative reforms to management planning and plan for the publication of ambitious new outcomes for Protected Landscapes and the publication of new Management Plan guidance early next year.

We recognize the scale and significant implications of these reforms for management planning. During the government's consultation on the Landscapes Review Response, which ended on 9 April, we also listened carefully to those of you who voiced support for a more flexible and less prescriptive approach to management planning. We also received feedback that Management Planning Partnerships would like time to digest reforms and updated guidance and embed them into new Management Plans.

Defra is currently looking at the feasibility and legal implications of a voluntary option to delay to account for this. We are looking into this primarily for those Management Plan Partnerships who are due to publish their Management Plans in 2023 or 2024. We expect those who have recently published or are due to publish management plans in the near future to be unaffected. The final decision on this delay will be subject to legal and ministerial advice. We are aiming to issue official communications confirming this decision within the coming weeks.

We are grateful for all the work you are doing to prepare and implement Management Plans and thank you for your patience and understanding."

Before the final decision is made on deferment it will be advisable to check with the local planning authorities that the Management Plan and policies within it will continue to be a material planning consideration until the new Plan is in place.

<p><b>List of Background Papers</b> Government guidance - Areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs): designation and management <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-aonbs-designation-and-management">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-aonbs-designation-and-management</a></p>
<p><b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b> The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.</p>
<p><b>Environmental Appraisal</b> The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.</p>
<p><b>Risk Management Appraisal</b> Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.</p>
<p><b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b> The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.</p>
<p><b>Appendices</b> None</p>



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## AONB TEAM WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

**Responsible Officer** Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager  
 e-mail: [phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01743 254741

### Summary

This paper provides members with an update of recent work by the AONB Team.

### Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the update.

### Background

An update is included as appendix 1. This is largely based on the report of 17<sup>th</sup> May to the Strategy & Performance Committee and there is less detail on the most recent activity. Partnership members will have a further opportunity to talk to the team at the forthcoming Forum and Tour event on 26<sup>th</sup> July.

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
<b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b> The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
<b>Environmental Appraisal</b> The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
<b>Risk Management Appraisal</b> Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
<b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b> The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
<b>Appendices</b> Appendix 1 AONB Partnership team work programme update at 4 <sup>th</sup> July 2022

## Appendix 1 AONB Partnership team work programme update at 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022

**TAKING ACTION - on the ground and in our communities - to conserve and enhance natural beauty and to promote enjoyment and understanding.**

### Farming in Protected Landscapes

Year 1 of the programme was completed. Budget monitoring and adjustments were carried out in the run-up to the year end. Site visits were carried out to sign off each project, claims and payments were processed and all reporting completed, including detailed financial and project breakdown plus lessons learned. An evaluation survey was completed. Defra training events were attended on subsidy control and on the application process.

A webinar was held on 13<sup>th</sup> April and a series of four local drop-in advice clinics are being held late April to mid May – at Stoke St. Milborough, Newcastle, Hope and Cardington. Improvements have been made to our FiPL web pages and summaries of the projects that have been awarded a grant have been included - [Projects that have received a grant from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme \(shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk\)](https://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk). A new pop-up banner, posters and fliers have also been produced. An article was written and circulated for Parish newsletters. A Data Sharing request was made to the Rural Payments Agency to enable us to mailshot farmers directly about the programme. A farm walk at Cleedownton organised in partnership with NFU was held at the end of June.

We are working on updating the local priorities guidance and as part of this some artwork images were commissioned from Alan Duncan to illustrate project ideas. Two small contracts for strategic advice were let on the slightly under-represented programme themes of Climate and People, which have proved very useful.

Joy, Alison and Phil attended a Defra regional FiPL workshop at the Cotswolds on 5<sup>th</sup> May. The second Panel meeting within year 2 is on 5<sup>th</sup> July. A reasonable number of potential projects are in the pipeline, but overall despite considerable promotion activity, demand remains relatively modest relative to the allocation of funds we have. We have discussed with Defra the possibility of using some of the funds to increase our advice capacity but it looks likely that they will favour the reallocation of any underspend to other areas in the country where demand is high.

### Young Rangers project

Since the project started in December 2020, Joe has recruited 53 young people (aged 12-16) onto the scheme, and 40 are actively participating. South Shropshire Youth Forum as project partner deliver the programme in the eastern half of the AONB with two further Young Ranger groups.

A range of nature conservation, wildlife survey and outdoor adventure activities have been delivered in 'wild places' in the AONB. Recent sessions have included: scrub bashing at Nills Quarry, hedge planting with CPRE, enrichment sessions with Bishop's Castle Community College working with Lightfoot, hedge laying at Acton Scott estate, National Nestbox Week – nest box survey at Stiperstones, coppicing at Hope Valley, a pine marten session with Stuart Edmunds and Toni Pettit, willow weaving with Gary Cowell, Easter events, a 2 day Green Woodworking course at Poles Coppice, and Dawn Chorus day.

Further activities are being set up including adventure activities with Creative Outdoors. Evaluation has been carried out, and publicity has included a feature on Radio Shropshire.

So far, 7 young people have achieved the 'Explorer level' John Muir Award, with two achieving the higher 'Discoverer' award. The project is also registered with the awarding body AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance), to deliver the Unit Award Scheme and this offers participants the chance to gain recognition for their involvement. A number of young people have so far gained certificates in heritage training elements including hedgelaying, grassland management and green woodworking. Two Young Rangers are engaged with the Stepping Stones 'Listening to the Landscape' project.

Green Leaders (the leadership element of the project with young people aged 17-21). Participation on Green Leaders is proving a challenge. A number of sessions have been held with Ludlow College (6<sup>th</sup> Form), with 12 young people registered and 4 attending a recent session. The Green Leaders programme looks like it may not develop into what we had hoped but will hopefully still have some useful outcomes.

#### Our Upland Commons project (national project)

Local delivery of the project is led by the Shropshire Hills Project Officer Renee Wallace, who is attached to our team but managed by the Foundation for Common Land (and employed through National Trust as accountable body). The project is working on three commons – Long Mynd, Stiperstones and Clee Liberty. Key activities of the project locally have included bracken management, a shepherding trial on the Stiperstones, monitoring and conservation projects on wheatear, whinchat and butterflies, and a number of historic environment events.

AONB team members are also involved in supporting Renee. Phil co-Chairs the Area Group which met on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, and sits on the national project board. Cath is providing support to Renee on John Muir Award and Nigel attended the Hillforts event. Some valuable information has been shared on activity in other areas including farm carbon accounting and *Molinia* control.

#### Stepping Stones project

Cath is contracted to the National Trust for farmer engagement and facilitation work linked to the ELM Test & Trial and Green Recovery Challenge Fund project, and we support the project in other ways, including recent proposals developing for a National Lottery Heritage Fund bid.

- Defra ELM Test & Trial The third Test & Trial working with the Upper Onny Farmers Group is up and running, focusing on the Historic Environment and working with 10 farms. The first phase is going well and we are starting to line up the next five farmers to take part in phase two. The first phase is to retro-fit the historic environment into five existing Whole Farm Plans and phase two will integrate the historic environment into five new Whole Farm Plans. In contrast to existing agri-environment schemes, the Whole Farm Plan approach aims to identify measures and implement management which is good for the farm business as well as good for the environment. To achieve this, we bring together the knowledge and expertise of the farmer with a farm business adviser (Richard Wheeldon), an environment adviser (Carolyn Jones) and an archaeologist (Janine Young).

- Green Recovery Challenge Fund Upper Onny Farmers Group events - The next event for the group is a farm visit on May 18<sup>th</sup> to land owned by Matt Sankey to look at opportunities and ideal scenarios to capitalise on environmental benefits, e.g. woodland, wood pasture, hedgerows, wetland and hay meadows. This will include opportunities for funding from various sources. Other events being planned for this year include – a farm visit with a focus on water and a trip to visit upland livestock farms in other Protected Landscapes where regenerative agriculture is being implemented successfully.

- Listening to Landscape arts project – This is a consultation to listen and ensure people closely linked to the land are represented within the Stepping Stones project, and capturing different people’s connections and thoughts about the landscape of the area. The consultation will include landowners, commoners, farmers, small business owners, residents and visitors of all ages across the Stepping Stones area. Cath has approached and lined up the 20 core participants. Faye Claridge, the artist and photographer, is now meeting these individuals to carry out the interviews, photography and filming. A wider group of others will have the opportunity to participate through drop-in events and call-outs.

#### John Muir Award

Cath is running the John Muir Award for 20 Year 6 children and teachers from the Blue Hills Federation of Schools (Newcastle, Bucknell and Clunbury). The first two outdoor trips happened in 2021 to Bury Ditches and Clunton Coppice. With a focus on learning about where our food comes from and what farmers are doing to benefit the environment and landscape, the remaining trips include Cow Hall in May to explore and learn about an organic upland livestock farm in the Clun Forest. Staff from Buglife’s B-Lines project will also join us and carry out activities with the children focused on pollinators and insect conservation on farmland. The final visit is in June to Brow Farm, Norbury, an organic dairy farm. The children will share their experiences and learning at their final event on July 13<sup>th</sup>. Cath is also supporting Farlow Primary School with their Award and helping Renee with the John Muir Award element of Our Upland Commons project.

#### Defra Tree Health Pilot

Mike is our lead for this programme running in a number of protected landscapes. Discussions have been with Matthew Smith Forestry Commission and the SC Tree team – no applications to the scheme have been received. Promotion has been carried out via the AONB newsletter, parish newsletters, email to our farmer mailing list, a news item on the website and social media posts. FC are now looking to revamp the scheme.

[www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-health-pilot-scheme.](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-health-pilot-scheme)

[Health of AONB woodlands continues to be of some concern \(news item on AONB website\).](#)

Support has been provided for initiatives led by others, including:

- CPRE Hedgerows project – providing children’s sessions, kitbag for schools
- John Muir Award activities by Blue Hills Federation schools - Cow Hall visit.
- Local farmer input into Middle Marches Community Land Trust Regenerative Farming conference 6<sup>th</sup> May
- WSP Clun Flood Alleviation project
- Clun Castle habitat management (English Heritage)
- Wrekin summit jubilee artwork project (TWC)
- Lower Coston riverbank flood damage
- Doddington Church lottery project
- Bishop’s Castle town square project
- Bishop’s Castle Walking Festival
- Conservation Fund project applicants
- Our Upland Commons promotional activity
- Shropshire ‘Love Nature’ Festival

### **Sustainable Tourism delivery:**

Shropshire Hills Tourism Expo & Leaflet Swap – this was held on 17<sup>th</sup> March at the Discovery Centre and was well attended. Nigel introduced the event and talked about the Shropshire Welcomes campaign, and a social media workshop was run by Louise Welsby from Buy From. <https://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/news/-visit-shropshire-hills-leaflet-swap-is-back>.

Shuttle Buses – The service started on 2<sup>nd</sup> June and runs to late September.

'Fix the Fort' – Additional funding is being sought from the charitable fund of HF Holidays (who run the Long Mynd Hotel) to augment the £3,900 donated through the appeal to date.

Shropshire Welcomes Campaign – Nigel has given lots of support throughout this project, helping to secure a strong focus on sustainable tourism in the resulting marketing. This has been much appreciated by the Council and partners.

### **Project development:**

Peatlands – The project is still in a scoping and development phase, with further potential funding sources to be identified. We looked into commissioning remote sensing spectral analysis, but the company chose not to go forward with this. We have had useful discussions with the CREST team at University Centre Shrewsbury. The Wildlife Trust are exploring a FiPL bid to develop feasibility study/restoration plan for Clun Peatlands. We have done some consultation with the Land, Life & Livelihoods group in the Upper Clun regarding landowner contact and potential wetland restoration. Mike wrote an article for the Clun Chronicle and on 16<sup>th</sup> March did a Peatlands talk for the Clun and Bishop's Castle branch of Shropshire Wildlife Trust. We attended a webinar on government funding through the Peatland Code, but it seems this is not possible for us as it is geared to the main deep peat areas. Mike held a meeting with contacts at Harper Adams University exploring links on how marginal areas of peatland may be restored. Mike made a site visit on 28<sup>th</sup> April to Obley Turbary and Recreation Ground with Clunbury Parish Council, Trustees and Clunbury Climate and Environment Group. On 12<sup>th</sup> May the Clun Catchment Partnership event including field visits is focussing on peatlands, with about 25 people attending.

Ancient Woodlands project – A project proposal was submitted to Woodland Trust providing a rationale for Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland restoration in the Shropshire Hills, and there are ongoing discussions with Woodland Trust and Severn Trent Water. Discussions were also held with National Trust, but they are not likely to be a partner as they have carried out a lot of work on their land already. With the Woodland Trust we prepared a 'Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Fund' Regional Woodland Restoration bid for which the Woodland Trust were the lead applicant for a Shropshire Hills project delivered by ourselves. We have recently heard that this was successful. Funding applied for is for a Project Officer for 33-months between July 2022-March 2025. We are also costing up work to provide a basis for funding bid to Severn Trent Water's Boost for Biodiversity Strategic Partnership Funds which would fund the active restoration work.

**INFLUENCING OTHERS - lead and champion the delivery of public benefits from the AONB, working strategically and collaboratively from policy to grassroots level.**

AONB Management Plan

Phil provided input to a Natural England contract to update AONB Management Plan guidance.

Local climate partnerships

We have maintained input to both the South Shropshire Climate Action Group and the Shropshire Climate Action Partnership. There is an informal Shropshire group looking at carbon accounting for land (soils and vegetation) to which we are also contributing.

Shropshire Good Food Partnership

The AONB Partnership signed up to the Shropshire Good Food Charter and we are involved with the 'Wise Land Stewardship' strand of its activity, focused on regenerative farming.

Clun catchment

There are continuing discussions about how to influence land management to improve water quality and the condition of the River Clun SAC. Unblocking the limitations on built development is a major driver for Shropshire Council.

AONB Trust, Conservation Fund and Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB

AONB Conservation Fund – Grant claims have been for completed projects and final reports added to the website [Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund project summaries](#). Support has been given to applicants for the new year of funding, including Llanfair Waterdine Community Trust. The AONB Trustees meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> April awarded grants to 5 projects. A second round of funding has been opened, with a deadline of 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022. There is a total of £15,000 to distribute this financial year.

Friends – Membership remains steady at around 120, mostly now paying by direct debit which reduces admin. Regular newsletters are sent out via Mailchimp.

AONB Trust and fund-raising – Two strands of fund-raising are being pursued – through businesses and through applications to larger charitable trusts. The charitable fund-raising is being supported by a few days' work by a professional fund-raiser, funded by the additional Defra money at the end of 2021-22. A new Business Supporters Scheme has been developed by a sub-group of trustees and is due to be launched imminently.

Planning

We made contact with the SC Planning Policy team to encourage inclusion of the 'setting' of the AONB in policy as part of the Local Plan Examination process. This has not been taken up.

Strategic tourism work

We had involvement in the Shropshire Destination Management Plan launch workshop in March, and along with others have in the last year been successful in ensuring a strong sustainability focus within the new plan. This is a real achievement and we need to build on this engagement, as well as maintaining our links with businesses and tourism structures within our area itself. We are in discussion with the Europarc Federation regarding renewal of



the Sustainable Tourism Charter. We provide ongoing support and input to the Visit Shropshire Hills and Visit Shropshire committees, as well as continued involvement with Ludlow Destination Partnership and renewed links with Much Wenlock tourism reps.

### Other influencing

We have commented on or provided input to:

- Felling licence applications – especially related to ash dieback
- Public complaint about inappropriate tree felling
- Woodland design plans and tree planting proposals
- Ordinary Watercourse Consents
- Agricultural EIAs – ploughing of permanent grassland
- Casework on Vic Brittain motocross event
- Airband new broadband provision proposals in SW part of AONB

The AONB Partnership position statement on ash dieback disease was agreed and has been published, in response to the high number of felling licence applications requesting clear-fell.

### Local partnership working

This has included:

SC Culture, Leisure & Tourism meetings  
Teme Partnership Steering Group  
Shropshire Invasive Non-Native Species Initiative Steering Group  
Transport planning  
Input to SC Employee Reference group  
Meeting with Tracy Darke Assistant Director Economy  
SC Climate Officer group  
Rea Brook working group  
Clun Technical Steering Group  
River Severn basin catchment partnership  
Shropshire Love Nature Festival (Shropshire Climate Partnership)  
EA and Severn Trent Teme catchment staff  
Helen Upson Offa's Dyke project – including a cluster of farmers at Llanfair Hill (FiPL)  
SCAP Land & Biodiversity group  
Carbon accounting on land work  
Strategic discussions re Clun catchment  
Shared Prosperity Fund workshop with CLT & Economic Development teams

### Communications & public awareness

The website has been regularly updated and improved and we make regular posts on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram. We have had contact with Google to resolve issues with the AONB pin on Google maps.

Press releases, articles & newsletters - The AONB E-newsletter was sent out in March to over 3,000 people on our Gov Delivery mailing list – the open rate was 35%. 5 articles were sent to parish newsletters, on: FiPL, Shuttles, Conservation Fund, Tree Health Pilot Scheme & the Landscapes (Glover) Review. These topics were also put out as news items on our website [Read news articles about the Shropshire Hills AONB.](#) We have provided articles into the monthly Shropshire Council Culture, Leisure & Tourism newsletter.

Discussion is happening about a possible further reprint of the Clun Valley walks book.

Events – 2022 events have been added to the website [See Events happening in the Shropshire Hills AONB.](#)

Mike did a talk on peatlands to Clun & Bishop's Castle branch of Shropshire Wildlife Trust and led a guided walk along the River Clun on 9<sup>th</sup> May, looking at Recovery Sites and the challenges of restoring a freshwater pearl mussel river. Phil did a talk to Pulverbatch WI in March.

**MANAGING OUR BUSINESS - develop a robust, effective and financially sustainable AONB organisation.**

AONB Partnership

The 22<sup>nd</sup> March in person meeting was well attended. Meetings are planned for 12<sup>th</sup> July and 8<sup>th</sup> November.

We are planning a new format for a summer Forum and Tour event in July. This will be a visible and high profile event to enable different stakeholders involved with the AONB to get together, get to know one another and learn more about the team's work and other areas of activity in the AONB.

Government response to Glover Review

We published an article on the consultation for parish newsletters.

Mike attended a webinar on the proposed National Landscapes Partnership.

Phil has attended Defra seminars on rural enterprise and climate change and has provided input to discussion on potential reform of the Conservation Board model.

National Association for AONBs

Climate Change collaboration – Phil and Nigel both presented topic sections at the national staff webinar on 10<sup>th</sup> March to disseminate the work of the Collaboration group and the five topic sub-groups. In early April the new Framework and Toolkit along with Chairs Statement were launched.

Phil has been leading the group on Nature-Based Solutions. As part of this an NAAONB contract has been let to Cranfield University for carbon audit (of land and habitats) of all English AONBs. There was a national webinar to disseminate the findings on 14<sup>th</sup> June.

Nigel is involved with the Sustainable Tourism & Transport sub-group, which has prepared a national survey of AONB teams on sustainable tourism.

Steph attended a NAAONB Communications meeting.

The NAAONB team met in Church Stretton in early March and Phil met with them informally to discuss some local issues.

AONB team and office

We are currently recruiting for a permanent Natural Environment Officer to replace Mike when he retires. We will run the two posts in parallel for some months as an extended handover/learning period for the new postholder. We still have occupancy limits affecting our use of the office due to ventilation issues, and the team continue to use a high proportion of home working.