SHROPSHIRE HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2.00pm 18th November 2026

Church Stretton Library

AGENDA

Main roles of the committee - scrutiny and advisory oversight of:

- *Work of the Team, including strategic direction and monitoring progress*
- *Team budgets, accounts and the deployment of resources*
- *Implementation by all parties of the National Landscape Management Plan*
- *Fulfilment by relevant authorities of duty to seek to further the purpose of designation*

1 Welcome and apologies

2 Management Plan progress update (see attached paper)

3 Summary of Team work plan 2026-27 progress (see attached paper)

4 Summary of National Landscape Team budgets (see attached paper)

5 Landscape Connections project update (see attached paper)

6 Update on Forum and Key Partner Delivery Group (verbal)

7 Sustainable Tourism Strategy - progress update (see attached paper)

8 Hills Ford Rally - discussion on Scrutiny session (verbal)

9 Government & policy update (verbal)

10 National Landscapes Association update (verbal)

11 Any other Business

12 Dates of next meetings: tbc

Item 2. Management Plan progress update

Around a year on from final preparation of the Management Plan, it is timely to capture and assess progress. There is no set process or format for this, but it is important to try to capture activity of partners as well as the National Landscape Team. The Key Partner Delivery Group have been approached for content. A draft of the progress update is attached at Appendix 1. It is hoped that some more content can be added before the update is published.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to comment on the draft progress update provided.

This paper has been prepared by Phil Holden, Team Manager and members of the Team. For further details contact 01743 254741/ phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk.

Appendix 1 Draft progress update for Shropshire Hills five year Plan 'Thriving in Balance with Nature', November 2026

Progress review of implementation of the Shropshire Hills Management Plan 2025-2030 'Thriving in Balance with Nature'

Draft, 8th November 2026

Reminder summary of key Plan priorities:

For the full Plan see https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/a-special-place/management-plan

Nature is restored and natural processes regenerated

- Build the **nature recovery network** by restoring and creating more connected habitats for wildlife – woodlands, rivers and wetlands, meadows, scrub, hedges, road verges, etc.
- Avoid further harm and **manage existing good habitats**.
- **Integrate nature with farming** and land management.
- Increase **native tree and woodland cover**.
- Targeted action for particularly important **species**.
- Support and enable **natural processes**.
- Help people to **connect to nature**.

Climate is stabilised through decarbonising, and we are resilient to change

- **Face up to the challenge** – changing, preparing, adapting.
- Achieve **big reductions in greenhouse gas emissions** through technological, behavioural and structural changes in all sectors.
- Encourage **dialogue and collective action** on climate.
- Undertake more detailed work on **adaptation**.
- Maximise **storage and sequestration of carbon in land**, and apply nature-based solutions at scale.
- Appropriate deployment of **renewable energy**.
- Seek to ensure a **just transition** for all of society.

Land is nurtured so it can sustain us

- Forge a **new sustainable future for farming** - especially livestock farming in the uplands, balancing food production with nature.
- Transition to **more agro-ecological farming**.
- Understand and value our **exceptional geology**.
- **Look after soils**, especially through regenerative practices.
- Support the movement for a **fairer and healthier food system**.
- Ensure **appropriate forms of built development** on farms.
- Support **sustainable forestry**, balancing production with other benefits.
- Support **skills development** for land management.
- Develop the role of **farmer clusters and groups**.

Water is clean, and its flows and cycles support our lives, and all life

- **Re-naturalise our rivers and their catchments** - with less engineered stream and river channels.
- **Hold more water higher up for longer** to slow flood peaks and maintain flows in dry periods, including rewetting headwater land.
- **Reduce all forms of pollution** to achieve cleaner rivers.
- **Manage catchments in an integrated way** for multiple benefits.
- Improve **management and storage of water** as a resource.

People are healthy and connected to nature – in vibrant communities and as welcome visitors

- Support **meeting everybody's basic needs of wellbeing**.
- Take active steps to **address barriers faced by underserved communities** (including local people and visitors).
- **Involve and welcome a wider range of people** from all parts of society to enjoy the area.
- Encourage **active recreation for health and wellbeing**.
- Invest in improvements and maintenance of the **access network**.
- Manage localised **impacts and pressures from visitors**.
- Support **learning** related to all aspects of the landscape.
- Enable more opportunities for **volunteering and involvement**.

The Shropshire Hills are valued and cared for as a special Place

- Build a **regenerative economy** that supports a healthy environment and meets the needs of all of society.
- **Reject developments which harm** or take from the environment.
- Support transitions to **sustainable tourism and transport**.
- Protect **tranquillity and dark skies**.
- Value and celebrate our varied **cultural heritage**.
- Develop **sense of place** at local levels and for the Shropshire Hills.
- Build strong **communities**, and support **local action.**
- Optimise links between the Shropshire Hills and **surrounding areas**.

Progress review

The large number of actors, the complexity of topics and uncertainty of funding means that defining specific timetabled actions in the Plan was not realistic. Instead the Plan defines **Policies**, **Recommendations** and **Aspirations** on key topics to guide the actions of stakeholders. This is a balance of ambition and realism. As we approach being a year on from the Plan approval, it is timely to review progress. Action by anyone can support the Plan, and the progress update will try to reflect this, albeit with a focus on the activity of key delivery partners. Progress is captured below under the six theme headings and overall for actions with a wide scope.

Programmes and initiatives that contribute to many or all of the Plan themes

- Continued strong delivery through **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)**, supporting projects across habitat restoration, access, water management, regenerative farming, cultural heritage and community engagement. Around £1 million per year continues to be invested locally through the programme.

- Award of almost **£1 million National Lottery Heritage Fund development funding** for the **Shropshire Hills Landscape Connections** programme. Led by the National Trust with Shropshire Hills National Landscape, Severn Rivers Trust and Shropshire Wildlife Trust, the project will develop a 10-year programme focused on climate resilience, farming and nature, and reducing barriers to accessing nature. Recruitment and start-up work commenced for Landscape Connections, including partnership structures involving Natural England, Environment Agency, Upper Onny Farmers Group and others.

- Strengthened **partnership working and engagement** through the new Shropshire Hills National Landscape structures, including Forum, Advisory Committee, Key Delivery Partner Group, etc, and continued collaboration with local authorities, statutory agencies, farmers, landowners, community groups and businesses.

Nature

- Publication and adoption of the **Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)**, providing a county-wide framework for habitat restoration and nature recovery, supported by Shropshire Council, Telford & Wrekin Council and Natural England.
- Delivery of a programme of **30 by 30, wildlife-rich habitat creation and FiPL projects** including heathland restoration, meadow creation, Rescuing Rocks and Overgrown Relics, woodland management, pond restoration and habitat connectivity works.
- Progress on **species recovery initiatives** including curlew conservation, freshwater pearl mussel work and support for Community Wildlife Groups.
- Continued development of **landscape-scale initiatives** at Gatten, Hope Valley, Clee Liberty, Stapeley Common and other priority sites, helping to restore and connect habitats.
- Ongoing **engagement of parish councils and community organisations** around LNRS delivery and local nature recovery action.
- Increased focus on **woodland resilience, ancient woodland management and appropriate woodland creation** through project development, consultations and adviser support.
- Continued activity for **engagement and nature connection**, including Young Rangers, partner education programmes, etc
- At Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, 8 hectares of former rank grassland restored as flower-rich **meadow**, with over 200 plant species recorded; alongside 1km of new **hedgerow**, coppice woodland management and creation of a wetland attracting snipe.

Challenges

- Securing sufficient funding and advisory capacity for delivery of LNRS priorities at the scale required.
- Continuing pressures on priority habitats from climate change, invasive species, disease and fragmented ecological networks.

Climate

- Growing uptake of **regenerative and agroecological farming** approaches through FiPL, farmer groups and demonstration events.
- Progress on **planning 3rd December 2026 Shropshire Hills Forum event** themed on Climate and Nature response, and focused on adaptation, resilience and partnership action in response to climate change.
- **Tree planting, hedgerow restoration and habitat creation schemes** continuing to contribute to carbon storage, sequestration and climate resilience.
- Increased focus on **wildfire preparedness and planning**, including farmer engagement, awareness raising and discussions with partner organisations and emergency services.
- **Landscape Connections** development work identifying opportunities for nature-based solutions and **climate resilience** across farms, rivers and communities.
- Continued successful operation of the **Shropshire Hills Shuttle Bus**, helping reduce private car dependence for recreational visits.
- At Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, a 70kW **solar array** installed, saving approximately 14 tonnes of CO_2 in its first year, alongside **Climate Cafés** and **youth engagement** on climate action through the "Sowing Seeds" conference.

Challenges

- Increasing frequency of drought, wildfire risk and extreme weather events affecting farming, habitats and water resources.
- Translating growing awareness of climate impacts into coordinated action for adaptation and to reduce emissions.

Land

- Farmers **evolving land management practices** with FiPL grant support including rotational grazing and soil health measures.
- Ongoing **support for farmers through FiPL and farmer networks**, including events on soils, water management, farm resilience, fire risk and business adaptation.
- Delivery of **hedgerow restoration, rotational grazing, woodland management and soil improvement projects** contributing to more sustainable land management.
- Continued activity through **farmer groups** including Upper Onny Farmers Group, Clee View Farmers, Apedale, Clun and other collaborative networks sharing knowledge and practical experience.
- **Farm visits and demonstration events** highlighting regenerative farming, agroforestry and whole-farm planning approaches.
- The **Landscape Connections** project will include development of a **Farming and Nature Hub**.
- Ongoing **advice and engagement** with landowners on woodland resilience, habitat management and future land use opportunities.

Challenges

- Inadequate government funding available for the Sustainable Farming Incentive.
- Balancing food production, climate resilience and nature recovery across farmed landscapes.

Water

- Completion and promotion of the **Walcot Wiggle river restoration project**, reconnecting over one kilometre of historic river channel with its floodplain and creating wetlands that slow, store and clean water naturally.
- Continued partnership working through the **Clun Catchment Partnership**, including development of a catchment vision and further emphasis on integrated catchment management.
- Delivery of **FiPL-funded projects** involving watercourse fencing, natural flood management (leaky dams, etc), farm water audits, pond and scrape creation and river habitat improvements.
- Further development of partnership and potential project working for the **Teme Headwaters**.
- Completion of the **Upper Clun Headwaters report 'Holding Water, Holding Ground'**. Distribution to relevant landowners is in progress, which will be followed by publication.
- Progress on **freshwater pearl mussel recovery** and associated habitat improvement work, supported by partners including Severn Rivers Trust, Natural England and Severn Trent.
- Continued discussion of **natural flood management** opportunities linked to highways, farms and wider catchment resilience.
- At Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Monthly River Onny **water quality monitoring** by trained volunteers, annual **invasive species control** and a **new wetland** area helping store water during periods of heavy rainfall.

Challenges

- Drought and low river flows exacerbating water quality concerns in sensitive catchments.
- Securing resources for landscape-scale delivery of catchment restoration measures.

People

- Continuation of the **Young Rangers programme**, including conservation activities, navigation training, canoeing, outdoor learning and youth leadership opportunities.
- The **'Open Horizons' accessible viewpoints initiative** with Shropshire Council delivered accessibility improvements at over 10 sites, increasing opportunities for enjoyment of the National Landscape by people with limited mobility.
- Continued delivery of **inclusion and outreach work** engaging people living with dementia, refugees, asylum seekers and communities who face barriers to accessing nature.
- Development of new **arts-based projects** building on the national Nature Calling programme and extending opportunities for connection with nature.
- Delivery of the **Hill Stories** project, working with farmers and communities to share stories and strengthen engagement with landscape and heritage.
- Successful operation of the **Shropshire Hills Shuttle Bus**, carrying over 3,600 passengers across the 2025 and 2026 seasons, with increased use and income, supported through a new partnership with local transport providers. This helps people access key parts of the National Landscape without using private cars.
- Development of **accessibility improvements** funded by Defra capital, including Changing Places toilet, upgraded accessible paths, along with improved visitor information, sensory mapping and digital engagement initiatives centred on key visitor sites including the Discovery Centre and The Bog.
- At **Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre**, major **accessibility improvements** including a Changing Places toilet, Tramper scooter, accessible wildlife viewing platform and 2.5km of accessible paths, alongside educational activities reaching around 3,000 schoolchildren.
- At Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, extensive **community engagement** through health, food and nature programmes, including cookery courses for food bank users and a wide-ranging events programme focused on wellbeing and connection with nature.

Challenges

- Continuing to widen participation amongst groups traditionally underrepresented in countryside access and conservation.
- Securing sustainable funding for engagement, access and youth programmes.

Place

- Ongoing work linked to **Clun Castle**, including community engagement, interpretation, volunteer involvement and heritage-focused events.
- Continued development of projects at The Bog, Stapeley Common, local viewpoints and other **heritage and landscape sites**.
- Launch of the **Shropshire Good Food Trail**, strengthening links between local food, sustainable tourism and sense of place.
- Development of new **visitor itineraries**, mapping and destination initiatives in partnership with Visit Shropshire and local tourism organisations.
- Work progressing on **interpretation** proposals for the Clee Hill.
- Increased emphasis on **heritage**, local identity and storytelling through Hill Stories, cultural events and interpretation initiatives.
- **Regenerative tourism** principles have been embedded within the approved Shropshire Destination Management Plan 2026-2029, helping influence tourism policy and practice across Shropshire.
- The refreshed **Shropshire Hills Visitor Map** now actively promotes nature recovery, local food, Curlew Country and responsible visitor behaviour, strengthening links between tourism, conservation and local businesses.
- The new **Shropshire & Telford Local Visitor Economic Partnership** has been formed, with representation from the National Landscape Team, promoting regenerative tourism approaches with regional and national partners.
- At Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, developed stronger strategic **partnerships** with organisations including RSPB, Shropshire Climate Action, Church Stretton Dementia Friends, local schools and community groups, helping **strengthen the Centre's role as a local hub**.

Challenges

- Further strengthening recognition of the National Landscape and local place identity across communities and visitors.
- Developing stronger links between sustainable tourism, local businesses, heritage and conservation outcomes.

Item 3. Summary of Team work plan 2026-27 progress

A summary of the Team's activities from April 2026 to date has been prepared, structured around the work programme headings, and this is presented as Appendix 1.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to comment on the progress update provided.

This paper has been prepared by Phil Holden, Team Manager and members of the Team. For further details contact 01743 254741/ phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk.

Appendix 1 Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team - Work Programme 2026-27 Summary, 8th November 2026

Appendix 1 to item 3 Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team - Work Programme 2026-27 Summary 8th November 2026

Area of work	Key actions	Progress update at end September 2026
CONVENE, INSPIRE AND CO-CREATE – engage and bring people together to build a shared vision for the Shropshire Hills, especially through the Management Plan, and foster support and commitment for this.		
Implement new partnership working structures	Hold meetings of and develop communications with new **Forum**, **Advisory Committee**, and **Key Delivery Partner Group**. Facilitate the Clun Catchment Partnership.	First meetings held of new Advisory Committee on 23rd June, and Forum on 29th April. The 3rd December Forum event is planned as a participative event on stepping up our response for climate and nature. A small contract has been let for youth engagement. Key Delivery Partner Group formalised with Terms of Reference, briefing emails sent. Meetings held of the Clun Catchment Partnership with catchment visioning workshop 23rd April, and a site visit to the Weirstone project in the Upper Clun on 8th October.
Management Plan	Continue to **disseminate and promote** the Plan, produce year 1 progress report Further embed Doughnut Economics and regenerative approaches.	Management Plan promoted through presentations, webinars and consultation responses. Team discussions have drawn on the Plan in relation to communications, climate response and partnership working. Regenerative principles and Doughnut Economics continue to inform discussions on future strategy, land management, tourism and climate adaptation.
Climate & Ecological Emergency	Implement and update **Climate Change Action Plan** including adaptation plan. Build **nature and ecosystem recovery** into projects and strategic work.	Significant attention has been given to climate adaptation, including planning the December Forum around climate response, and work around wildfire risks across the National Landscape. Climate resilience, peatland restoration, habitat recovery, agroforestry, nature recovery and ecosystem enhancement have been incorporated into project development, capital funding and strategic partnership work.
Young Rangers and outreach work	Continue programme of **Young Rangers** activities for 12-18 year olds. Identify and work with **new audiences** from underserved communities.	14 Young Rangers sessions were delivered involving 35 young people and nearly 100 activity hours, including two bushcraft-themed summer residentials, visits to Snailbeach Mine and the Curlew Country Project, plus other outdoor skills, conservation and access projects. Outreach work has included work with people with disabilities, dementia, refugee communities and others facing barriers to participation. Creative and participant-led sessions have been delivered with Pneuma Affinity and Piece of String. Other engagement has included work with schools and participation in a local youth providers conference.
Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust	Support to administer **Conservation Fund** grants, and advice to projects. Administer **Friends** scheme and work with the Trust to expand membership.	The Trust has been supported through grant administration, fundraising and communications. Three fundraising talks have been initiated and promoted, new trustees appointed, and work continued to strengthen communications, membership development and support for future Trust activity.

ENABLE AND INFLUENCE: Support partners and stakeholders to take action, building their capacity and understanding; influence relevant strategy and policy; support enjoyment and understanding of the area.		
Farming in Protected Landscapes programme	Implement **Year 6** of FiPL programme offering grants for farmers and landowners, with advice and support to applicants and farmer groups.	Delivery of Year 6 of FiPL continues strongly with 51 projects funded and the grant budget almost fully allocated. A number of farmer engagement events were held on topics including woodland management, flood mitigation, deer management, business resilience and processes accessing government funding such as SFI and capital grants. In response to wildfire occurrence and high risk, a valuable event was held with farmers and Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service. Other support for wildfire resilience preparation has included adaptors to enable the use of farm water bowsers with fire engines, and support for production of Farm Fire Plans. A nutrient management planning event is planned. A new full time FiPL Adviser was recruited, with a valuable handover from the retiring officer.
Communications on special qualities of the landscape and on team activity	Maintain and update **website** and regular **social media** output. Publish **E-newsletters and Annual Review**, give **talks**. Update Communications & Engagement Strategy Targeted improvements to visitor facing information and interpretation.	Activity has included newsletters, website updates, event promotion and communications planning. Progress has been made on website accessibility, communications policies and mailing lists. Communications support has also contributed to the Walcot Wiggle river restoration project, including partnership publicity and video production. Discussions and initial drafting have taken place on the new Communications & Engagement Strategy. A number of interpretation projects have been delivered through FiPL, and collaboration discussions to ensure a strategic and effective approach to interpretation.
Sustainable tourism	Support partner delivery of **Shropshire Hills Sustainable Tourism Strategy**.	Support continued for delivery of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy with partners through engagement with Visit Shropshire, destination partnerships and tourism networks. Initiatives have included visitor information improvements, tourism product development, mapping projects, food tourism promotion and visitor management. Other work has included embedding regenerative tourism principles through work with Visit England and Church Stretton, and close involvement with the Local Visitor Economy Partnership.
Clun Headwaters	Disseminate results of eco-hydrological surveys of headwaters in the Upper Clun and work with partners and landowners to deliver recommendations.	The public-facing Clun Headwaters ecohydrological report is now printed and is being distributed to relevant landowners. The document communicates the importance of headwater areas and will help to identify practical opportunities for habitat and water management, supporting catchment resilience. Findings of the project have been shared through a presentation at the Shropshire Rivers Hub conference in October.

Develop new projects	With partners, develop area project proposals for the **Upper Teme**. Explore other potential new projects.	The team has continued supporting development of the Teme Headwaters partner group looking at long term opportunities for projects and collaboration. Other work has included exploring nature recovery, pond creation and orchard projects supporting Local Nature Recovery Strategy delivery. The Team have also participated in the new Teme Catchment Steering Group to develop a pipeline of projects for the Teme Catchment.
Planning	Comment on relevant **policy** documents and key **planning applications**. Maintain and improve links with **local authority** planning staff and members.	A formal submission was made to the Shropshire Local Plan scoping stage, continuing the team's involvement in planning policy and strategic development issues affecting the National Landscape. A response is being prepared on the Regulation 15 consultation for the Strettons Neighbourhood Plan.
Input to other strategies, schemes and partnerships	Provide input to strategic **consultations** (non-planning). Input to delivery work on **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**. Input to **Local Visitor Economy Partnership, Teme Partnership** and others. Comment on non-planning **casework** such as EIAs and watercourses.	The team continues to contribute actively to Local Nature Recovery Strategy delivery, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership, and the Teme Partnership. Responses have been provided to 18 felling licence consultations, 3 woodland creation proposals and a number of ordinary watercourse applications, promoting sustainable land management, nature recovery and Management Plan objectives. A detailed response on behalf of the Team and Advisory Committee in opposition to potential repeats of the recent car rally was submitted to Shropshire Council's Scrutiny Committee in early November.
Support initiatives led by others	Support **partner initiatives** and **community projects** as possible, and respond to requests for information.	The team continued to provide advice, technical input and partnership support across a wide range of community, conservation and access projects. This has included work with landowners, parish councils, charities, farmers, community groups, the National Trust, Severn Rivers Trust and other organisations responding to opportunities as they emerged.
Training and volunteering	Involve **trainees, students and volunteers** where possible and appropriate.	The Team have supported volunteer involvement through Young Rangers, activities at Clun Castle, public events, conservation projects and community surveys. 16 Young Rangers gained outdoor first aid qualifications, while AQA accreditation has supported both young people and adults in developing practical countryside and heritage skills. Internal training included health and safety, safeguarding, educational visits and first aid.

DELIVER IN PARTNERSHIP: Lead the implementation of defined actions and projects, working with partners		
Defra capital work	Implement eligible projects especially on **30by30**, working with partners.	Good progress has been made allocating and developing 30x30 and wildlife-rich habitat creation funding. Site assessments, ecological advice, project development and partner engagement have led to 8 30x30 projects so far being allocated grant, including woodland restoration, flood management, wetland improvement and upland habitat recovery. Wildlife-rich habitat creation funding has been allocated to 7 projects for floodplain wetland mosaics, native species-rich hedgerows, ponds, lines of trees, and orchards.
Access capital work	Implement eligible **access projects** working with partners.	Access capital projects are focusing on key visitor sites including The Bog Mine and Visitor Centre, National Trust Carding Mill Valley, and the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre , as well as seeking opportunities to improve access to lesser-known viewpoints and sites. A range of access projects are being developed with partners, including physical accessibility improvements, interpretation and viewpoint improvements, all ability access paths, an Accessibility Hub and website improvements. 6 projects are advanced, but finalising and delivery by the end of March remains a challenge.
Landscape Connections	Start to implement **development phase** of Landscape Connections project (led by National Trust).	Following approval of the Stage 1 bid, the project has moved into the 20 month development phase. Activity has included recruitment of the project team, communications and publicity activity, finalising governance arrangements and a holding start-up workshop and Partnership Steering Group. There has been interest from other National Landscape teams who are developing projects. Of the 10 staff posts in the project development team (some part-time), two will sit within the National Landscape Team – the Farming & Nature Hub Co-ordinator and Community Officer.
Ancient Woodland Restoration project	Implement **year 2 of extended project** for advice and restoration of ancient woodlands, in partnership with Woodland Trust.	Condition assessments and preparation has been undertaken for three sites at Gibbons Coppice, Oaks Wood and Hope Valley Nature Reserve, with around £39,000 allocated for practical restoration work. Other work in the project has included public engagement talks and collaboration with the Woodland Trust, team members and partners.
Sustainable tourism delivery	Manage 2026 **Shuttle bus** service and plan 2027 service. Implement other **Sustainable Tourism Strategy actions**.	The Shuttle Bus operated successfully in the 2026 season with an improved timetable resulting in increased passenger numbers and income. The bus also provided valuable access especially during summer road closures on the Long Mynd due to wildfire risk. Other sustainable tourism work has included visitor monitoring, accessibility projects, visitor management, connecting tourism with conservation and local food, and strengthening regenerative tourism approaches.

EVOLVE AND COLLABORATE: Develop the team, working processes and financial robustness, and play an active part in wider networks		
Team development	Hold **team** meetings, support **staff training and development**	Regular team meetings, inductions, staff handovers and professional development activities have supported team effectiveness. Recruitment for the FiPL Adviser post was completed successfully. Performance reviews and training have been carried out.
Finance, office, IT, Health & Safety, legal requirements	Manage and administer team **finances**, achieve earned income, continue to modernise working practices and equipment, ensure **compliance** in all areas.	Work has continued on financial administration, procurement, office organisation and IT improvements funded by Defra revenue uplift. Health and Safety compliance has been strengthened through training, risk assessment reviews and safeguarding discussions, helping modernise systems and effectiveness. A number of staff have undertaken contract management training.
National Landscapes network and broader collaboration	Work with **National Landscapes Association, Defra, Protected Landscapes Partnership and EUROPARC Federation** to share ideas and best principles for areas of work.	The team maintained active engagement with the National Landscapes Association, Defra and wider networks including through governance discussions, conferences, webinars, board meetings and collaborative programmes. Knowledge exchange has informed local delivery, while the team has contributed examples of good practice including the Walcot Wiggle river restoration project, and recent award of Landscape Connections funding. Two Young Rangers took part in a EUROPARC Atlantic Isles exchange visit to Northern Ireland in October along with young people from other protected landscapes.

Item 4. Summary of National Landscape Team budgets

At month 8 now in the Financial Year, the team is making good progress to full and effective utilisation of available budgets, including the one-year Defra revenue uplift. The Farming in Protected Landscapes budget is almost fully allocated. Allocation of Defra capital is progressing well, though some projects need to be finalised and many remain to be completed by partners before the end of March.

The 3 year flat settlement of Defra revenue makes the budgets for the coming two years more challenging. However, some additional revenue is expected from Defra, and the start of the Landscape Connections project also creates opportunities to reduce core costs and/or generate some income. The team remain closely engaged with Defra and the National Landscapes Association regarding the need to improve the base revenue funding longer-term.

Core budget

The majority of the core budget is utilised in regular committed spend on staff, and office and other running costs. The one-off Defra uplift of revenue funding has been useful to help strengthen capacity and reduce future financial pressures as intended, especially through IT equipment upgrades, and temporary uplift of hours for one or two staff.

Defra capital within the 'core' grant offer includes £234,181 'core capital' (including for 30 by 30 nature targets) and £114,054 Access capital. Allocation of this capital funding is well advanced, though this remains more challenging for the Access funding. 'In principle' allocations of the same amounts of these two Defra capital streams for the next two years makes planning ahead easier, and a pipeline of projects is in development.

Farming in Protected Landscapes

The 2026-27 delivery grant allocation of £1,011,045 is now virtually fully allocated. A modest over-commitment of FiPL grants is allowed for, underwritten by reserves, in order to achieve as close to full spend as possible, since a few projects are always unable to deliver fully and therefore underspend. FiPL has a 3 year funding allocation from Defra, and so grant offers in principle for next Financial Year (and the one after) can still be made up to April and this helps take some pressure off next year's allocation.

Wildlife-rich habitat creation capital funding is administered within FiPL, and Defra have recently allocated an additional £12,598 of revenue funding to support this delivery. Our initial allocation of this capital of £494,438 was always felt to be very high given the tight criteria for this funding, and £174,438 of this was returned to Defra in August to allocate to other Landscapes, leaving us £320,000 to spend. The £72,733 allocation of wildlife-rich habitat creation capital for next Financial Year 2027-28 is much reduced on this year's allocation.

Other projects

- Continuation funding for the Ancient Woodland restoration project beyond March 2027 is being looked at.

- The Shuttles have a break-even budget for the 2026 season, including partner contributions.

- Landscape Connections. A part-time core member of staff is going to go into the Landscape Connections project, retaining their core role at just 1 day/week. This will clearly reduce their core work, but it does ease the core staffing budget for the next two years. Our match funding into the Landscape Connections development phase has already been paid.

Reserves still stand at £154k and are vital to ease cash flow and manage risk.

Expenditure	**2026-27 budget**	**2026-27 forecast outturn**
Core budget		
Staff costs (inclusive of all on costs)	£346,349	£326,168
Office costs	£34,065	£28,650
Promotional Activity	£11,500	£10,060
Partnership costs and development work	£12,165	£11,450
Strategic & development work	£4,500	£2,000
Community engagement activities	£4,300	£3,000
Core capital (30 x 30 etc)	£234,181	£234,181
Access capital	£114,054	£114,054
Core total	**£761,114**	**£729,563**
Projects		
Farming in Protected Landscapes programme	£1,169,688	£1,169,688
Wildlife-rich habitat creation	£494,438	£332,598
Ancient Woodland Restoration project	£47,685	£47,685
Clun Catchment	£2,743	£2,744
Shuttles	£6,520	£6,520
GRAND TOTAL	**£2,482,188**	**£2,288,798**
Income	**2026-27 current budget**	**2026-27 forecast outturn**
Core budget		
Defra single pot core revenue funding	£319,096	£319,096
Shropshire Council core contribution	£36,100	£36,100
Telford & Wrekin Council core contribution	£3,000	£3,000
Defra capital funding (including deferred)	£348,235	£357,235
Other income	£41,683	£14,132
Core total	**£761,114**	**£729,563**
Farming in Protected Landscapes (incl Wildlife-rich)	£1,664,126	£1,502,286
Other project funding, various sources	£57,948	£56,949
GRAND TOTAL	**£2,482,188**	**£2,288,798**

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to comment on the budget update provided.

This paper has been prepared by Phil Holden, Team Manager and members of the Team. For further details contact 01743 254741/ phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk.

Item 5. Landscape Connections project update

News of success of the bid to National Lottery Heritage Fund for development stage funding was announced in July, although embargoed for publicity for a while.

The development phase is around 20 months and includes development of the full stage 2 bid and supporting plans, etc to secure the 8 years of delivery phase funding.

The vision of the project is to deliver transformative change across the Shropshire Hills by empowering farmers, land managers, volunteers, young people and community groups to come together to address the pressing issues of climate change, nature recovery, economic instability, social isolation, and unequal access to nature. Or, to put it another way, it's about building resilience – in the landscape, in its communities who live, work and play here, and in the organisations who are active here. Resilience to the impacts of climate change and nature loss, to mental and physical health challenges, and to economic uncertainty.

The three main themes of the project are – climate resilience (with a focus on water), a Farming and Nature Hub, and equal access to nature.

Four organisations are employing staff for the development phase, totalling 10 posts (some of which are part-time) – the National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Severn Rivers Trust and the National Landscape Team. The two posts within the National Landscape team are the full time Farming & Nature Hub Coordinator (the advert is out for this currently) and a part-time Community Officer (for which an internal appointment is being made).

An allocation is included in the budget in training for the project team in transformative change, and the National Landscape Team will procure and manage this contract.

The Landscape Connections Partnership Steering Group has been formalised, and is now chaired by the National Landscape Team Manager.

Further information is available at https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/our-work/projects/shropshire-hills-landscape-connections.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to comment on the update provided.

This paper has been prepared by Phil Holden, Team Manager and members of the Team. For further details contact 01743 254741/ phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk.

Item 7. Sustainable Tourism Strategy – progress update

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy runs from 2024 to 2029. An annual progress update of the Strategy is good practice, and also required for the Sustainable Tourism Charter renewal.

Brief updates are shown here under each of the five Strategy themes:

1. Setting an ambitious sustainable vision for tourism and engaging people with this

- Aims and priorities of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy are embedded in the new **Shropshire National Landscape Management Plan 'Thriving in Balance with Nature',** which was formally approved by the two local authorities in January and February 2026.
- The team influenced the development of **Shropshire Destination Management Plan 2026-2029**, strengthening content on sustainable and regenerative tourism in this. The Plan is now approved.
- The team with partners are continuing a development in the vision for tourism from sustainable (seeking to minimise harm) **towards regenerative** - which looks for tourism to contribute positively and to actively help make the place thrive. The team have developed ideas with partners and networks and shared examples on regenerative tourism, including through talks to local groups and liaison with tourism providers.
- The **new structures** for the National Landscape – Forum, Advisory Committee and Key Delivery Partner Group are being used to share ideas and practices linked to sustainable and regenerative tourism.
- The practical use of **Doughnut Economics** has been developed, including a data portrait and community portrait of place, and application to local food systems.
- The team have been exploring ways of connecting visitors with **nature recovery** through tourism, and seeking funds from tourism bodies for funding nature recovery work.
- The Team make selected input on **planning consultations** to seek to protect the special qualities of the National Landscape.
- The **Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust** continues to fund-raise for the Conservation Fund, including through Friends of the Shropshire Hills, providing a channel for people to give back to the area. Additional fund-raising and awareness-raising activities were carried out in 2026, for the Trust's 10th anniversary.

2. Improving provision of sustainable tourism services which draw on the area's special qualities

- The **Shropshire Hills visitor map** was re-published in 20206 to focus on regenerative approaches such as supporting wildlife conservation (Curlew Country) and working with Shropshire Good Food Partnership to promote its Good Food Trail and promote buying local food from nature friendly farms and suppliers. The map continues to develop and promote a visitor ethic.
- The Shropshire Council **'Shropshire's Great Outdoors Project'**, with support from the National Landscape Team, developed accessible viewpoints and other projects to promote and facilitate accessibility and inclusion.
- The team delivered **Access for All projects** funded by Defra capital funding at a range of visitor locations – 'Open Horizons' improved accessibility and information at the 10 top

viewpoints in the Shropshire Hills, a Changing Places toilet was installed at the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, 350m of accessible footpath was upgraded or created at the Bog Visitor Centre, and accessibility infrastructure was installed at two National Trust visitor sites. Further access improvements have also been completed at Clee Hill Village, Darnford, Poles Coppice and Nills Hill near Pontesbury.

- The Team's Engagement Ranger continues to **engage new groups from underserved communities and young people**. This strand of activity has also been built in to the new Landscape Connections project funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- New **arts projects** have been developed building on the work completed as part of the national 'Nature Calling' project focussing on access opportunities for people living with disability and mental health issues.
- A number of projects funded through the team under the **Farming in Protected Landscapes programme** have delivered access improvements.
- Strong links continue with the main **visitor centres** in the Shropshire Hills including the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Cardingmill Valley and Bog Visitor Centre. .

3. Supporting and encouraging environmental practices and behaviours by businesses and visitors

- The 2025 and 2026 **Shuttles** seasons have been very successful – carrying over 3,600 passengers, with visitor use and income increasing over the two years. A new partnership has been made with Shropshire Passenger Transport Team and Lakeside Coaches for the running of the service.
- **Low impact and active travel and transport** are promoted in the visitor map and other promotion and communications. The Team have worked with Visit Shropshire, Transport for Wales and Midlands Railways to promote visits to Shropshire by train.
- **Sustainability and nature messaging** has been included in our communications and presentations to community groups.
- The team have worked more closely with Visit Shropshire, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre and **visitor information centres** in Ludlow, Craven Arms, Church Stretton and Shrewsbury.
- The Team and Advisory Committee made representations to Shropshire Council against the holding or repeat of a **competitive car rally** in the National Landscape, and the team also had liaison with event organisers to seek to reduce impacts.

4. Managing the effects of localised visitor pressure, mitigating impacts, and sharing economic benefit by promoting visitor activity across the area

- The team continue liaison with the network of **countryside site providers** in the Shropshire Hills.
- The team have been developing work on a **car parks audit, dispersal activities**, and encouraging public transport use.
- The team have been exploring use of mobile phone location data to track **visitor use and behaviour** at key sites.
- The team have explored approaches to **influence the inappropriate use of electric mountain bikes** on the Wrekin, Caer Caradoc and Stiperstones NNR.

- Partners have been working together to manage visitor pressure and unauthorised vehicle use and parking on **Stapeley Common**, to reduce negative impacts on the landscape and farmers.
- Initial work has been undertaken to upgrade the National Landscape **website.**

5. Co-ordinating and adding value to sustainable tourism delivery

- A new **Local Visitor Economic Partnership** for Shropshire and Telford has been formed by the Councils working with the business sector. The National Landscape Team have provided strong input to develop regenerative tourism practice among partners, and have a seat on the LVEP Board to steer this work and influence policy and decision making. Work has included collaboration with Visit England's Regenerative Tourism Officer and contact with other LVEPs across the UK.
- **Tourism has been integrated** into the work of new National Landscape structures including the Forum.
- The team have been exploring use of mobile phone location data to track **visitor use and behaviour** at key sites.
- The team participate actively in the **EUROPARC Sustainable Tourism Charter network** and in National Landscape sustainable tourism networks, including progressing the development of regenerative tourism approaches.

Towards a Regenerative Tourism Strategy for the Shropshire Hills

It is intended that the next Shropshire Hills Tourism Strategy be a Regenerative Tourism Strategy. This is not just a change of word. While sustainable tourism focuses on reducing negative impacts and maintaining environmental, social and economic assets, regenerative tourism aims to leave the area in a better condition than before, actively contributing to the health of nature, communities, culture and local livelihoods. The shift is towards "How can tourism help the Shropshire Hills thrive?" Tourism can then be viewed as a means of supporting a living landscape and vibrant communities.

A regenerative strategy would place greater emphasis on:

- **Restoring nature and ecosystem health**, with tourism helping to support habitat recovery, biodiversity, healthy soils and clean water.
- **Strengthening local communities**, ensuring tourism contributes to community wellbeing, local identity and resilience.
- **Deepening connections with place**, enabling visitors to understand, value and care for the landscape, culture and heritage of the Shropshire Hills.
- **Supporting regenerative local economies**, including stronger local supply chains and links to nature-friendly and regenerative farming.
- **Learning, adaptation and collaboration**, treating the strategy as a living framework that evolves through experimentation, reflection and partnership working.

Actions could include encouraging visitor participation in conservation projects, support for nature recovery initiatives, citizen science programmes, promotion of food from farms that enhance the environment, and recognition for tourism businesses that make measurable contributions to landscape and community regeneration.

Adopting a regenerative approach would provide a more inspiring vision, strengthen the qualities that attract visitors, and help build resilience to future challenges. It is also

complementary to the development in the Shropshire Hills and wider, of regenerative approaches in other topics including farming, and place-shaping more generally. Visit England is also now actively promoting regenerative tourism.

Monitoring

The direction towards regenerative also fits with the approach to monitoring outlined in the current Strategy, which is based on what is important and not just on what is easily measurable. Updates therefore need to draw on the knowledge of those involved where data is not available. A brief update on the indicators adopted is shown below.

Measure/indicator	**Current notes**
Carbon emissions from travel to and within the area	A greater emphasis on local activities and attractions may be reducing gradually some people's car travel once they are here.
Carbon emissions from tourism businesses e.g. energy use, footprint of food, drink and products	General emissions are reducing as nationally, due to behavioural and technological changes. More progress is possible and necessary to reach targets.
Negative environmental impacts from tourism e.g. path erosion, wildlife disturbance, loss of tranquillity, harm to water environment	Much good work is going on to manage impacts and raise awareness. The decision to allow the car rally was a negative step.
Financial support for conservation and nature recovery through tourism and visitors	New avenues are being explored but this means of funding remains small at present.
Proportion of sustainable and local food and drink used by visitors	Not known. The revitalised Shropshire Good Food Partnership is giving this greater profile.
Degree of social inclusion of tourism and among visitors	A recent forum on rural racism in which Shropshire Council takes part has observed a negative trend, with some political narratives making racism appear to be more acceptable in parts of society.
Social benefits, and avoidance of harm, to local communities from tourism	The Strettons Neighbourhood Plan places a sustainable approach to tourism quite centrally in the community's future vision.
Improved health, wellbeing, learning and connectedness to nature among visitors	Connection to nature appears to be rising in people's awareness and motivation for holidays.
Degree to which visitors show or develop pro-environmental behaviours	Increasing trend, now being adopted and supported by Visit England and others. There is a rise in the numbers of nature-focused visitors who are looking for opportunities to give back as part of their visit.
Adaptation to climate change (e.g. repairs plus improvements to infrastructure)	Adaptation is rising up the agenda with extreme weather events, but there remains much more that can be done.
Inclusive governance and partnership	Good progress through LVEP establishment and new National Landscape structures.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to comment on the content of the update.

This paper has been prepared by Phil Holden, Team Manager and Nigel McDonald, Regenerative Tourism Officer. For further details contact 01743 254741/ phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk.