

2009
2010

malvern hills
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Annual Report 2009/10



Chairman's foreword



Dr Bryan G Smith,
Chairman of the
Joint Advisory
Committee

Welcome to the annual report for the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership, covering the period 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010. This is the first of five annual reports which will summarise progress in delivering the current AONB Management Plan (2009-14). I am delighted that in this first year we have made progress against 23% of the Guiding Principles and Strategic Objectives contained within the Management Plan.

At this time of economic difficulty it is right that the AONB Partnership looks long and hard both at its own priorities and those of its key partners. We need to be flexible, responsive and realistic in identifying where we can be most effective with our resources and how we can best support the work of others. Our efforts to promote the uptake of Environmental Stewardship (page 10) and to understand how effective this mechanism is in conserving the special qualities of the area (page 4) is of direct relevance to local landowners and helps to deliver a key area of work for Natural England. Meanwhile, our numerous projects to support local communities in reducing energy consumption and living more sustainably (pages 12, 13, 15 and 18) demonstrate that the AONB Partnership is in tune with the new Government's aims to improve energy efficiency in homes and businesses, and to promote low carbon energy production.

At a time when public spending is being increasingly constrained there is also a greater need than ever to work together and to pool resources to achieve very real benefits for the AONB. This is something which the AONB Partnership is uniquely positioned to do, and indeed which it is designed for. One example amongst many is provided on page 9 where under an AONB Partnership umbrella, Natural England, English Heritage, Gloucestershire County Council and a local landowner were able to pool resources, expertise and effort to repair one of the AONB's Scheduled Monuments, thus improving its condition and removing it from risk.

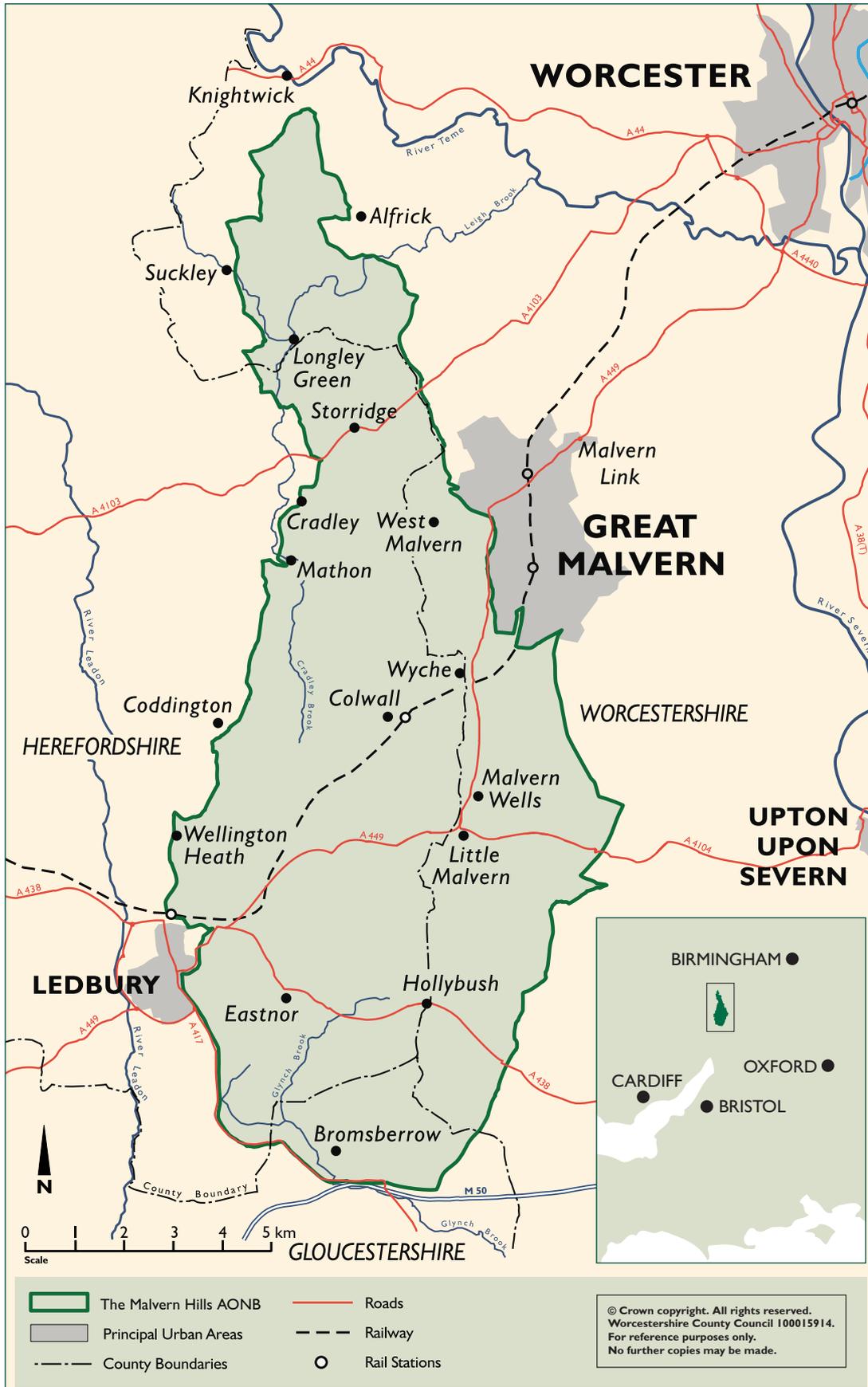
As always, we must never lose sight of the fact that retaining the integrity of this nationally important area is a constant challenge which is met through the hard work of many individuals and organisations. This report aims to provide you with just a taste of this effort. I hope you find it an instructive read.

Dr Bryan G Smith, Chairman of the Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Reference Numbers

A reference number (given in brackets) is provided alongside each item of work mentioned in this annual report. This refers to a specific Guiding Principle or Strategic Objective contained within the AONB Management Plan. In this way the annual report demonstrates how the AONB Partnership is implementing the AONB Management Plan.

Location of the Malvern Hills AONB



Outline map of the Malvern Hills AONB

Landscape

Burying Overhead Electricity Cables (L02)

The natural beauty of the landscape around Coddington Cross in the west of the AONB was significantly enhanced this year when almost 500 metres of overhead low voltage electricity cable were buried underground. This is the first such work to be completed in the AONB as part of a national arrangement between the Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM) and electricity companies operating in National Parks and AONBs. In the Malvern Hills AONB Central Networks is the electricity provider and key partner for this work. During the year OFGEM also announced a continuation of this scheme for a further five years from 2010.



Coddington Cross with overhead lines



Coddington Cross without overhead lines



Hedgerow gapping up

A Study of Environmental Stewardship (L04)

Environmental Stewardship is a vitally important Government scheme providing grants to land managers who deliver effective environmental management on their land. A detailed study of live Stewardship schemes in the AONB was carried out this year and highlighted that certain AONB habitats, such as grassland, are well covered by Environmental Stewardship. However, it also revealed that this funding programme is not supporting some other key habitats in the area to the same extent. Recommendations arising from the study include increasing the coverage of Higher Level Stewardship within the AONB, providing high quality and targeted advice to landowners and identifying expansion and connectivity priorities for Biodiversity Action Plan habitats.

Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancement Grants (L05)

The AONB Partnership provided almost £6,000 of grant this year to support local landowners in managing key habitats in the area. Work included establishing a new reed bed, pollarding mature trees and planting and laying hedges. Six local projects shared the funding which helped to lever in a similar level of financial support from the landowners themselves. The Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancement Grants programme was administered by Herefordshire Council.

Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity (LP2)

Worcestershire County Council completed important work this year to support the use of its Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) by decision-makers.

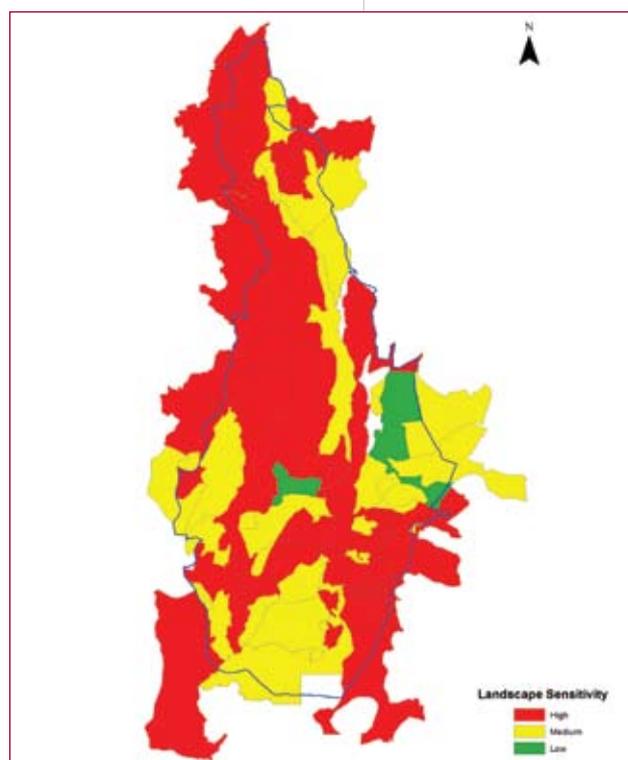
A web tool was created which allows people to access the LCA on line and the Council also provided training to planners and others in how to use it. In addition, an evaluation technique has been used to assess and record the sensitivity of different types of landscape to change. These are significant developments of the Landscape Character Assessment for the county and will assist in the professional evaluation of land use change.

Landscape Character Guidelines for the AONB (LP2)

A project to pilot the development of a set of Landscape Character Guidelines for the AONB was completed this year. The aim of the pilot work is to assess whether varied sources of information about the AONB (on landscape character, biodiversity, the historic environment etc.) can be brought together in a single place to inform future management of the area. The aspiration is to produce a joined-up and user-friendly guide which will be forward-looking and accessible to all. A peer group review will be used to assess the pilot work and to decide whether Landscape Character Guidelines should be produced for the whole AONB.



Hedgelaying at St Wulstan's Nature Reserve



Landscape sensitivity map



Wooded hills and farmlands

Management Plan references

L02 – Restore distinctive landscapes and landscape features

L04 – Undertake survey and research to understand and monitor landscape condition

L05 – Seek resources to promote landscape management and improvements

LP2 – Landscape Character Assessments ... should be used to inform decision-making and strategic planning

Biodiversity

Cattle Make a Return to Chase End Hill (B01)

After an absence of around a quarter of a century, cattle can be seen once again grazing on Chase End Hill – the southernmost of the Malvern Hills. The cattle belong to Bromesberrow Estate and their reintroduction this year is an essential component of the management needed to support key wildlife species on this Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The return of the cattle was facilitated by the prior installation of cattle grids on local roads in the area.



Cattle on Chase End Hill



Bat box installation at the Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve

High Brown Fritillary Habitat Survey (B05)

Butterfly Conservation carried out a survey of potential breeding areas for the rare High Brown Fritillary butterfly on the Southern Malvern Hills this year. The project, jointly funded by the AONB Partnership and the Malvern Hills Conservators, reported a 73% reduction in potential breeding habitats for this species compared to 2004/05. However, it also noted that recent management works at sites such as Swinyard Hill and Chase End Hill will create more favourable conditions for this species in the near future.

New Woodland Improvement Grant (B01)

The Forestry Commission in the West Midlands region launched a new Woodland Improvement Grant (part of the English Woodland Grant Scheme) for Local Wildlife Sites. This grant recognises the strategic importance of these sites which are not statutorily designated but which form a key part of the natural habitat resource in the area. Through this grant the Forestry Commission is offering a higher than normal contribution of 80% of agreed Standard Costs to woodland projects on Local Wildlife Sites.

Are Hedgerows in the Malvern Hills AONB Healthy? (B05)

Hedgerows are a distinctive landscape feature and habitat throughout the AONB. In 2009 a Local Hedgerow Survey, funded by Defra, found that 100% of surveyed hedgerows contained more than 80% cover of native woody species and almost 54% of hedgerow sections were species rich (containing 5 or more woody species). Some 'prize-winning' sections of hedgerow were found to contain in excess of 12 species! However, the study also raised causes for concern. For example, virtually every one of the 195 isolated hedgerow trees recorded during the survey were either mature or veteran. The absence of young trees clearly poses a threat to the future of hedgerow trees in the area.

As part of the wider study many land managers completed questionnaires and provided a valuable insight into current hedgerow management practices, attitudes and influences. Landowners from around the AONB also attended a hedgerow management event run by partners including Natural England and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. Attendees received advice on best practice and funding opportunities to support hedgerow management in the area.

In Brief

- Surveys carried out by Dr Keith Alexander revealed that a group of three orchards in the parish of Colwall contained an exceptional assemblage of wood decay (saproxylic) invertebrates and are amongst the richest traditional orchards that have been studied in Britain (B05).
- Eastnor Castle Estates Company carried out a spraying programme over Ragged Stone Hill with the aim of reducing bracken and improving habitats for wildlife (B01).
- A reed bed was established by the Malvern Hills Conservators at the Mill Pond in Golden Valley, with funding from the AONB Partnership (B01).
- Worcestershire Wildlife Trust erected two hibernation/breeding boxes for bats in the Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve, with funding support from the AONB Partnership (B01).

Management Plan references

B01 – Conserve, enhance and expand key habitats and populations of key species

B05 – Undertake survey and research on the AONB's biodiversity resources



Colwall Orchard Group bug hunting



Hedgerow management event

Geodiversity

Community Earth Heritage Champions (G01 and G02)

The 'Champions' Project was established by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust to support local people in caring for and using their local geological sites. There are six Champions sites in the AONB supported by 18 volunteers. This year volunteers (under the auspices of the Malvern Hills Conservators) carried out fencing and vegetation clearance works at Dingle, Gardiners and Tank quarries. This clearance work exposed some wonderful geological features which had previously been hidden.

Quarry Fencing (G01)

The significant quarrying activity which took place in the Malvern Hills in the past has exposed a lot of geological interest but has also left a challenge to those responsible for keeping these sites safe. During the year the Malvern Hills Conservators maintained fencing around Gardiners Quarry and Upper Dingle Quarry and replaced the fencing at the Wyche Quarry and around Earnslaw Quarry.

Surveys and Management Plans (G03 and G04)

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust prepared site management plans for seven Local Geological Sites in the AONB, funded by Herefordshire Council and Natural England through Defra's Aggregates Levy sustainability fund. Crucially, these management plans deal with archaeological and biological interests as well as with geodiversity. As such they set out to achieve integrated management which respects the many special interests found on these sites. The Earth Heritage Trust also completed 23 soil surveys in the AONB and audited a number of other geological sites. Information from this audit is being used to help compile a new geodiversity database for Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Volunteers clearing vegetation in Dingle Quarry



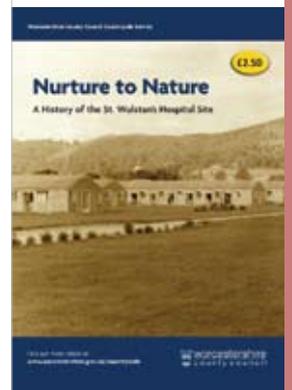
Management Plan references

- G01 – Conserve geodiversity in line with Geodiversity Action Plans
- G02 – Promote greater understanding of the geology of the AONB
- G03 – Undertake research to secure information on the state of the geodiversity resource
- G04 – Develop and implement local Geodiversity Action Plans

Historic Environment

Nurture to Nature at St Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve (H03)

The area now known as St Wulstan's Local Nature Reserve in Malvern Wells has had a varied and fascinating history, notably during and after WWII. This year Worcestershire County Council (the Reserve Managers) helped to oversee a History Archive Project which has seen volunteers collecting information about the site and recording the memories and recollections of local people. A booklet on this local history entitled 'Nurture to Nature' is available from Worcestershire County Council Countryside Service.



St Wulstan's local history guide

Ancient Monument Management (H01)

A nationally important moated site in the south of the AONB has benefitted from a partnership approach to management in which the landowner (Bromesberrow Estate), English Heritage, Natural England and Gloucestershire County Council have pooled their resources and expertise. Scrub has been removed from the site, coir matting has been introduced to prevent further erosion to the banks of the island and a maintenance agreement has been signed. Consequently, a designated Ancient Monument which had been at high risk and in declining condition is now classed as low risk.



Ancient monument before management



Ancient monument after management

Orchard Histories (H03)

Colwall Orchard Group were given a small grant from the AONB Partnership to record oral histories from five elderly people with experience of past orcharding practise and tradition. Vital skills and knowledge have now been documented for future generations. More information on the Colwall Orchard Group is available at www.greener.colwall.info/.

Management Plan references

H01 – Preserve, conserve and enhance Scheduled Ancient Monuments

H03 – Promote greater public understanding and engagement with the historic environment

Farming and Forestry

Management at Park Wood (F02)

Park Wood is an area of ancient semi-natural woodland on the slopes of the Malvern Hills. Dave Jackson of Wildwood Coppice Crafts is reinstating rotational coppice management of the wood through agreement with the Malvern Hills Conservators who own the land. As many as 40 volunteers helped to plant 400 hazel trees in the wood this year following clearance operations. The AONB Partnership provided a small grant towards the purchase of the trees.

Promoting Agri-environment Schemes (F01)

Agri-environment funding mechanisms are crucial in helping to secure appropriate environmental management of land in the AONB. As in previous years the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) received a grant through the AONB Sustainable Development Fund to visit farmers in the area and to provide 'free' advice and support. Fifteen visits were undertaken in total. These helped to generate two new applications for Entry Level Stewardship, one English Woodland Grant Scheme application and one application for a Woodland Improvement Grant. Progress was also made towards five new applications for Higher Level Stewardship.

Coppicing at Parkwood

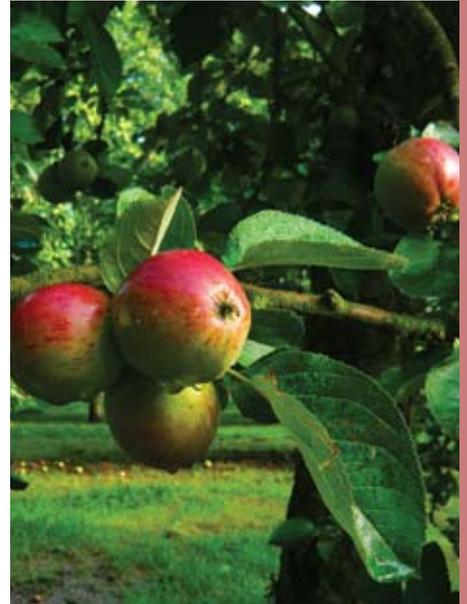




Tagging and surveying fruit trees



Tree Warden at work



Suckley Orchard

Managing Orchards in Colwall (FO2)

Around 100 volunteers in the Colwall Orchard Group built on their excellent work of previous years by helping to manage a range of traditional orchards in the parish. Conservation management was carried out in seven orchards and management advice was provided on a further three sites. Rescue pruning of 121 trees took place alongside the formative pruning of 50 trees and the planting of 30 new fruit trees. Orchard owners were shown how to turn their produce into apple juice on a Juicing Day, thus encouraging the production and consumption of local food.

The Orchard Group provides an excellent example of a community based, practical approach to supporting local landowners and conserving key habitats. Over the course of the year the group provided over 100 person days of work and engaged with the owners of seventeen orchards in Colwall Parish. Herefordshire Council supported the group and donated 67 fruit trees. All the work was underpinned by a grant from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund.

In Brief

- Worcestershire County Council provided training and support on hedge-laying, winter tree identification and orchard restoration to three parish based Tree Wardens in the AONB (FO2).
- Eastnor Castle Estates Company replanted many cut trees in order to help secure the restoration of the local landscape (FO3).
- The Forestry Commission began operations to thin 30 hectares of conifers from its land at Frith Wood near Ledbury (FO2).

Management Plan references

F01 – Promote the maximum uptake of agri-environment and woodland grant schemes

F02 – Bring characteristic habitats into favourable conservation condition

F03 – Ensure that 90% of all new woodland planting is of broadleaved semi-natural stock

Community-Living and Working

Woodland Management Skills (C03)

The retention and development of land management skills are fundamental to the future of the AONB. Funding from the AONB Partnership was used again this year to support a full time coppice apprentice who is working towards a nationally recognised Diploma in this field. As well as learning all about woodland management the apprentice is making contacts with local landowners. It is hoped that she will remain in the area on completion of the training and establish a relevant business in the AONB. The National Coppice Apprenticeship Scheme is a partnership project between the Greenwood Centre and the Bill Hogarth Memorial Apprenticeship Trust.



Bug Renga at Colwall Blossom Picnic

Colwall Orchard Group Community Events (C02)

The Colwall Orchard Group of volunteers has once again proved itself adept at raising awareness of the biological and historical significance of orchards through engaging local people in orchard life and management. This year a number of community events were organised to coincide with key points in nature's calendar – a Wassail and Mistletoe Fair in Winter, a Blossom Picnic in Spring and an Apple Day in Autumn. These events seem to be growing in popularity, typified by almost 200 people attending the Wassail on a cold Winter's night.



The Big Green Bus

Big Green Bus (C02)

The Big Green Bus has been described as a portable showcase for sustainable living. The bus visited the AONB this year and was itself visited by 120 local school children who learnt about energy and water saving devices, recycling and composting possibilities and much more besides. Displays, demonstrations, talks and gadgets all helped to keep interest levels high. More on the Big Green bus can be found at www.thebiggreenidea.org.

Colwall School Eco Garden (C02)

A grant from the AONB Partnership was used to convert Colwall Primary School's garden into a vegetable patch. Vegetable gardens are nothing new but through the school Gardening Club many children will now have a first-hand opportunity to learn about the benefits of growing and consuming local food. For entertainment, a living willow sculpture was also included in the project.



Colwall School Eco-garden



Orchard life

Unleashing Transition Malvern Hills (CP1)

Transition Malvern Hills is a community response to the challenges of climate change and peak oil. An AONB Sustainable Development Fund grant was used to fund the making of a film which promotes the many community based projects taking place in the area and which calls for more local action. The DVD was shown to around 500 people during an event to 'unleash' Transition Malvern Hills and can be viewed on YouTube.

Promoting Geodiversity (CO2)

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust has worked hard this year to raise awareness of the special geodiversity of the area. Around a dozen fieldtrips were given at Whitmans' Hill Quarry and a focus on young people was achieved through educational programmes in local schools, field trips and classroom learning.

Celebrating 10 years of Volunteering (CO2)

The Malvern Hills Conservators celebrated ten years of Conservation Volunteers this year. Ian Rowat, Director of the Conservators said that the enthusiasm and dedication of local volunteers has not waned since the first 'Conservation Day' in December 1999. In the last decade it is estimated that 186 volunteer days have been given to tasks such as scrub clearance and litter picking. This type of community engagement is invaluable to the protection and enhancement of the AONB.



Coppice apprentice on Pinnacle Hill

Management Plan references

CP1 – Enable vibrant communities to grow sustainably

CO2 – Develop an enhanced sense of ownership for, and appreciation of, the AONB amongst local communities

CO3 – Foster opportunities for training in land management and traditional building skills

Built Development

Building Materials Study (D01)

Many of the older buildings within the AONB were built quite literally from the rock upon which they stood. The old quarries have now closed and this can make it difficult for homeowners to obtain building materials for extensions and repairs that match the original character of a property or structure. As part of a national pilot study organised by English Heritage the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust collected data this year on locally distinctive building stones in Conservation Areas throughout the two counties. Information on alternative 'matching' stone sources has also been highlighted. It is hoped that this information will help to maintain local character in the built environment.

Malvern Stone Bank (D01)

Malvern stone often features in buildings and structures in and around the AONB and is a key component of the area's built heritage. Despite the demand for this material it is not unusual for quantities of this stone to be skipped and sent to landfill following building works. To help prevent this waste the AONB Partnership has established a 'stone bank' to provide a temporary storage area for this material and to encourage its re-use. A five year lease over a storage area on Brockhill Farm in Colwall was signed this year by Worcestershire County Council and the land owner.

Locally Distinctive Buildings (DP3)

Locally distinctive and historic buildings are a major element of the 'natural' beauty of the AONB and finding productive uses for them can be key to their survival. This year a number of significant buildings have been renovated including Peacock Villa in Eastnor Park (which has been restored for use as a holiday cottage) and the Cattleshed at White House farm. Eastnor Castle Estates Company also embarked on a project to repair the wall in Clencher's Mill Lane.

Peacock Villa under repair



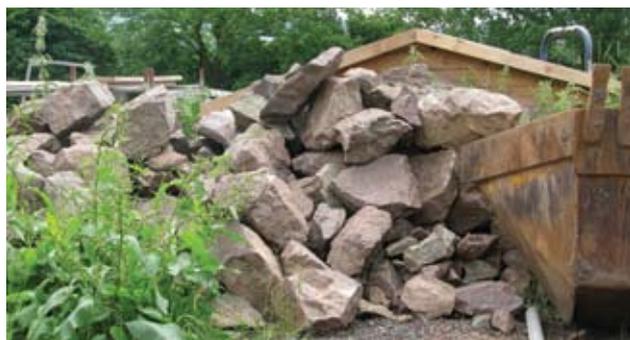
Management Plan references

DP1 – The distinctive character and natural beauty of the AONB will be reflected in consistent policy and guidance

DP3 – Development should be subject to high standards of design and sustainability. Energy conservation should be supported wherever possible

Cumulative Impact of Horses Study (D05)

Monitoring data suggests that horse related developments are on the increase in the AONB. In response, the AONB Partnership commissioned an assessment of the impact of equestrian activity in two distinct geographical areas. The study revealed that horse developments do cause individual and cumulative adverse impacts on landscapes in the area but these are not currently widespread and significant. The study recommended that guidance on horse management could help to avoid further impacts associated with equestrian activity in the future.



Stone bank at Brockhill Farm

Development Planning Activity (DP1)

New development can have a positive or negative impact on the AONB and the AONB Partnership compiles annual statistics on planning applications registered in the area. 2009/10 saw a significant rise in applications for equestrian related developments which accounted for almost 6.5% of all applications in the year. Permission was also sought to build a total of 42 new properties whilst extensions and alterations accounted for around 60% of all applications. Further details are available on request from the AONB Unit.

Home Energy Monitor System (DP3)

A grant from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund enabled a local inventor to promote and distribute a number of Home Energy monitors for use by members of the public. The monitors provide a 'dashboard' for the home which measures electricity, gas and water consumption. The monitors are on loan from Malvern Library and have proved extremely popular.

Transition Malvern energy leaflet

Colwall Home Energy Advice Service (DP3)

Funding from the AONB Partnership was used to support a community-based support and advice service to home owners in Colwall who wish to reduce energy consumption and save money. 13 professional surveys, seven volunteer surveys and 18 thermal imaging surveys were completed over the course of the year. 75% of those who received advice from the Colwall Greener team went on to carry out energy reduction measures in their homes.

In Brief

- The development of Worcestershire County Council's Waste Core Strategy continued this year and included the introduction of policies to protect the AONB (DP1).
- The Malvern Hills Conservators built a waste storage facility at Upper Wyche Quarry for grass cuttings, wood chip and scrub storage (DP3).

Management Plan references

D01 – Encourage the recycling of small quantities of locally distinctive building materials

D05 – Monitor the cumulative impact of small-scale development

Tourism, Recreation and Access

Miles Without Stiles (T02)

'Miles Without Stiles' are promoted footpaths and tracks which are suitable for those who may find walking a challenge and who don't want to clamber over barriers and obstacles in the countryside. This was the fourth year in which Herefordshire Council/AMEY Public Rights of Way delivered work under the Miles Without Stiles programme with financial support from the AONB Partnership. Key achievements included the replacement of 23 stiles with gates, major work on the proposed through route from Hollybush and Eastnor Park to Chances Pitch and the arrangement of a volunteer working day to widen the enclosed track in Frith Wood. The volunteer group consisted of the Wellington Heath P3 team, the Ramblers 'Herefordshire Trail' work group and 'The Geo-Park Way' work group. This voluntary work should help to increase the effectiveness of these groups in undertaking access work and maintaining the paths network. Information on Miles Without Stiles can be found at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/circularwalks.



Easy access bridge

Parish Improvement Project (PIP) at Suckley (T02)

Worcestershire County Council carried out a Parish Paths Improvement Project (PIP) in the parish of Suckley this year. A total of 83 'reports' were logged during the PIP, leading to the development of a schedule of work for improvements. Improvements are being carried out in tandem with landowners, sometimes through local contractors and sometimes through volunteer work parties.

AONB Website (T05)

The Malvern Hills AONB website has been given a face-lift. The new site incorporates an interactive map allowing visitors to view aerial images of the AONB landscapes and to identify whether a particular location is inside or outside the AONB. Text and images about local goods and services and 'green' accommodation providers have been added. Why not take a look at www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk



Malvern Hills AONB website

Malvern Access Guide (T02)

The Malvern Access Group expanded and re-launched its access guide this year. Originally produced in 2008, the upgraded 'Malvern Access Guide' now contains more information on all abilities access opportunities in and around Malvern and the surrounding countryside. The AONB Partnership provided financial support for the development of this guide through a small grant.



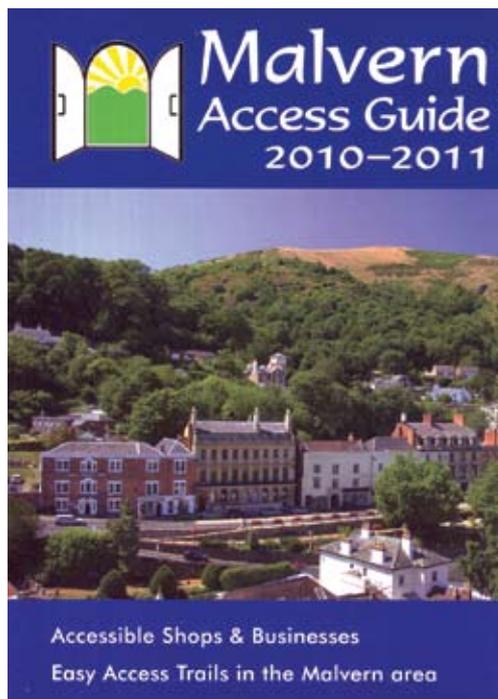
Access management at Frith Wood

Expedition Malvern (T01)

An educational initiative to open the eyes of young people to the environment of the Malvern Hills AONB has been supported by a grant from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund. 'Expedition Malvern' enabled 750 young people from 14 schools and one College of Further Education to visit the Hills and to learn about environmental issues and countryside skills such as navigation. Thirty one separate expeditions took place through the year.



Miles Without Stiles sign



The revised Malvern Access Guide

Management Plan references

T01 – Encourage and stimulate sustainable tourism and recreational use

T02 – Provide enhanced sustainable access and accessibility to recreation and the public rights of way network

T05 – Encourage greater awareness and understanding of the AONB

Transport

Traffic Monitoring (TRO3)

A mini network of traffic counters has been established to monitor traffic in key areas of the AONB. Three permanent counters, which collect data all day every day, and two temporary counters, which are in operation for two short periods during the course of the year, have been set up in collaboration with Worcestershire County Council. Data collected this year has been used to provide a baseline against which future changes in traffic numbers can be assessed.



Are you driving less than 6,000 miles a year? and only using your car 3 or 4 times a week then the COLWALL CAR CLUB could be a major money saver for you.

Colwall Car Club leaflet

Colwall Car Club (TRO6)

A car share scheme was established in the village of Colwall this year as part of a series of carbon reduction initiatives introduced by Colwall Greener. Three cars have been acquired and are being used by 16 members of the local community. The initiative aims to reduce carbon emissions and to spread the costs of running a car. The Car Club is administered by local volunteers. Car share schemes are not unusual in urban areas but this is an attempt to pilot a similar approach in a large village. The venture was supported with a grant from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund.

Smarter Choices Roadshow (TRO6)

A grant from the AONB Partnership was used to fund a demonstration of electric bicycles and scooters. The demonstrations took place at the Colwall Show, Colwall Primary School and at the 'Small Change - Big Difference' week organised by Malvern Hills District Council. The roadshows allowed people to test out these new technologies and to seek advice and information on running costs, reliability etc.

Hills Hopper (TRP1)

The Hills Hopper is a local bus service running on weekends and bank holidays. It is operated by Malvernian Tours and supported by Worcestershire County Council. Some headline passenger figures from the service this year are as follows:

- Numbers of passengers carried - 1739
- Numbers of passengers in busiest month (August) - 517
- Average subsidy per passenger - £6.77

This was the final year of operation for the Hills Hopper service in the AONB. Information on alternative bus services running in the area can be obtained from www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk



Colwall Car Club vehicle



Electric bikes at the Colwall Greener Show

Highways Design Guide (TRP2)

The AONB Unit and local Highways Authorities in the area have worked together this year on the development of a Highways Design guide for the AONB. The aim of this document is to ensure that road signs and markings are fit for purpose in preventing accidents and giving clear direction to road users whilst also respecting the special character of the AONB. The focus this year has been on the drafting of a technical document which is expected to be published later in 2010.

Sustainable Transport (TRP1)

An encouragement to travel sustainably has characterised a number of events taking place in the AONB this year. For example, Colwall Orchard Group promoted car-sharing for its community events whilst many visitors to the Big Chill Festival made use of cheap deals on public transport and free bus shuttles.

Management Plan references

TRP1 – Visitors should be able to access their desired destination by public transport services

TRP2 – Management of the access network should not detract from the special qualities of the landscape

TRO3 – Collect and monitor information about journey purposes

TRO6 – Develop, support and promote sustainable transport options

The Big Chill Festival at Eastnor



AONB Unit Report

AONB Unit Performance Indicators

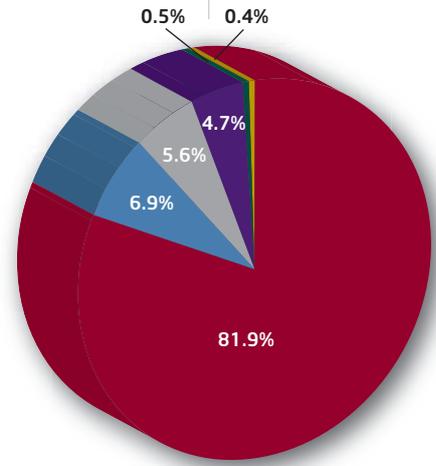
Natural England has developed a national framework for monitoring AONB Partnership performance. A slightly abridged version of this framework and the performance of the Malvern Hills AONB Unit in 2009-10 are set out in the table below.

Theme	Measure for the indicator	Definition	Performance
AONB Management Plan	The AONB Partnership has a current Management Plan which meets the requirements of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.	The Plan has been reviewed within five years of the last one; it conforms to the guidance for AONB Management Plans provided by Natural England; it has been formally adopted and published by all the relevant local authorities.	Yes
AONB Partnership	The AONB has an active and effective governance structure.	Record of regular Joint Advisory Committee and Steering Group meetings.	5 meetings (1 cancelled due to snow)
		AONB has undertaken a formal review of its governance structures within the last 5 years and had an adopted current set of terms of reference.	Yes
AONB Staff Unit	The AONB Unit has staff resources to undertake its work.	Total the number of AONB staff, in full-time equivalents, that were directly managed and hosted by the AONB Unit, at the financial year end.	3
	AONB Unit staff invests in continuous professional development.	Of the total in the measure above, list the number who undertook and recorded a minimum of 30 hours of training, personal development or similar during the year.	2
Financial resources	The AONB Unit secures direct income to fund its work.	Total income received into the AONB unit's own account from all sources during the financial year.	Total £239,109
		The percentage of the figure in Measure 4a above which was received from Natural England and Local Authorities.	98%
		The amount received from Natural England and Local Authorities.	Total £234,109
Leverage and "added value"	Additional resources mobilised by AONB unit through its partnership work.	Total direct funding received plus the total funding for projects and partnership programmes including matching income for SDF funded projects, total funds for HLF Project etc.	Total £268,697
		The percentage of the figure above which was received from Natural England.	71%
Financial management and reporting	Agreed timetable and requirements for financial management and reporting with Natural England met by the AONB unit.	The Unit submitted its final grant claim to Natural England by the required date.	Yes
		Published its annual report for the preceding year within six months of the financial year end.	Yes
		Submitted its business plan and grant application for the succeeding financial year by the required date.	Yes
Partnership working with management communities	The AONB Unit is an active partner in the work of the National Association of AONBs.	The AONB Unit (through its host authority or partnership organisation) was a full member of the National Association of AONBs.	Yes
		Was represented by attendance at the Annual Conference of the Association.	Yes
		All AONB Unit core staff attended at least 1 other national or regional NAAONB sponsored event.	Yes
	The AONB Unit actively involved in partnership working at a local level.	Total number of project steering groups, research initiatives, working groups and partnerships where the AONB Unit played an active and key role.	6
	The AONB Management Plan is formally endorsed and supported by partner organisations.	List the number of organisations who formally endorsed the plan when written and at the last review.	7
Business Plan targets	Achievement of the targets set out by the AONB Unit in its annual business plan or equivalent.	Include all actions set out in the annual business plan/core bid document agreed with Natural England.	Yes (86% of bid actions met)

AONB Unit Financial Summary

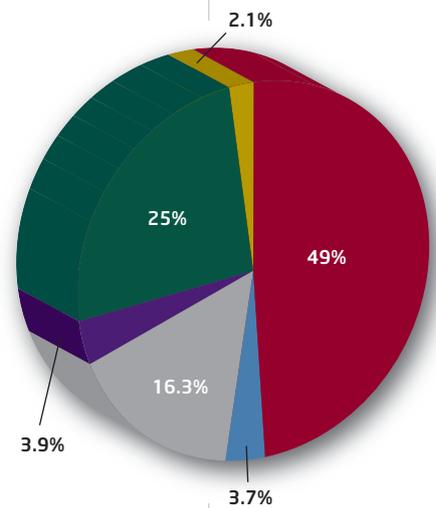
CORE INCOME

Natural England	£191,662
Herefordshire Council	£16,230
Worcestershire County Council	£13,268
Malvern Hills District Council	£11,000
Gloucestershire County Council	£1,077
Forest of Dean District Council	£872
Total	£234,109



CORE EXPENDITURE

Staff costs (inc, travel and training)	£114,764
Accommodation and office costs	£8,680
Partnership budget	£38,146
Partnership running costs	£9,237
Sustainable Development Fund	£58,542
Miles Without Stiles project	£5,000
Total	£234,109



ADDITIONAL PROJECT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)	£5,000
Total	£5,000

STAFF

The unit staff structure for the year was as follows:

AONB Partnership Manager	Paul Esrich
AONB Partnership Assistant Manager	David Armitage
AONB Partnership Support Officer	Clare Dinham/Emma Hiller

AONB Governance

Joint Advisory Committee 2009-10

Elected Members:

Dr B Smith (Chairman)	Malvern Hills Conservators	
Prof J Raine (Vice-Chairman)	Malvern Hills District Council	
Mr C Cheeseman	Malvern Hills District Council	
Ms J Bowden*	Worcestershire Association of Local Councils	
Mrs N Carless	Herefordshire Association of Local Councils	
Mr R Farmer**	Worcestershire County Council	
Mrs D Rayner***	Worcestershire County Council	
Miss M Cooper	Herefordshire Council	
Mr R Mills	Herefordshire Council	
Dr R Long	Forest of Dean District Council (also representing Gloucestershire County Council)	* Replaced by Mr J Black ** Replaced by Mr C Smith *** Replaced by Dr K Pollock

Non-Elected Members:

Mr M R Allfrey	National Farmers Union
Mr A Fleming	English Heritage
Mr P Hands	Visit Herefordshire/Destination Worcestershire
Mr J Hervey-Bathurst	Country Landowners and Business Association
Mr W Barnes	Forestry Commission
Prof R Bryant	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust
Mr D Ward/Mr F Hill	Campaign to Protect Rural England
Ms K White/ Ms H McDowall	Natural England

Co-opted Members:

Mr A Lee	Herefordshire Local Access Forum
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Steering Group 2009-10

Ian Rowat (Chairman)	Malvern Hills Conservators
Kelda White/Hazel McDowall	Natural England
Andy Maginnis	Worcestershire County Council
Heather Royal	Malvern Hills District Council
James Bisset/Rob Hemblade	Herefordshire Council
Robert Niblett	Gloucestershire County Council
Nigel Gibbons	Forest of Dean District Council

AONB Partnership Governance Structure

Title	Purpose	Participants
Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)	To coordinate the management of the AONB and the implementation of the AONB Management Plan	Representatives from a variety of public, private and voluntary sector bodies
Steering Group	To provide guidance, advice and support to the Joint Advisory Committee and Staff Unit	Officers from Natural England, local authorities and the Malvern Hills Conservators
Staff Unit	To assist the Joint Advisory Committee in fulfilling its duties	AONB Partnership Manager and staff

Photography credits

All photographs copyright Malvern Hills AONB except:

Hedgerow gapping up - *Worcestershire County Council*

Hedgelaying at St Wulstan's Nature Reserve - *Worcestershire County Council*

Landscape sensitivity map - *Worcestershire County Council*

Wooded hills and farmlands - *Countryside*

Bat box installation at Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve - *Worcestershire Wildlife Trust*

Colwall Orchard Group bug hunting - *Anneliese Emmans Dean, Colwall Orchard Group*

Volunteers clearing vegetation in Dingle Quarry - *Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust*

St Wulstan's local history guide - *Worcestershire County Council*

Tagging and surveying fruit trees - *Helen Stace, Colwall Orchard Group*

Tree Warden at work - *Worcestershire County Council*

Bug Renga at Colwall Blossom Picnic - *Helen Stace, Colwall Orchard Group*

Colwall School Eco-garden - *Hazel Copeland, Colwall School*

Orchard life - *Helen Stace, Colwall Orchard Group*

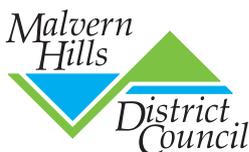
Coppice apprentice on Pinnacle Hill - *Dave Jackson, Malvern Hills Coppice Network*

Peacock Villa under restoration - *Eastnor Castle Estates Company*

Easy access bridge - *Herefordshire Council*

Access management at Frith Wood - *Herefordshire Council*

The following bodies provide financial support to the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership



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