

The Malvern Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Management Plan

2004 - 2009

Foreword

Hand in hand with the greater recognition and increased funding of AONBs has come the responsibility, under the CROW Act 2000, of preparing a Management Plan for our hills. It is vital that this ties together the hopes and aspirations of those who live and work in the area and those who come to enjoy the beauty, peace and tranquillity of the AONB, whilst ensuring the preservation of our landscapes, flora and fauna.

The Plan which we present is the distillation of the consultations amongst residents and constituent bodies of the JAC and represents much hard work by our officers over a long and difficult period. I am particularly grateful to David Armitage and our colleagues at Malvern Hills Conservators.

I commend the Plan to you.

Cllr Ted Roberts
Chairman of the Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E.A. Roberts'.

Councillor E.A. Roberts

We endorse the Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan as a guiding framework for maintaining the special character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, while recognising the need for a thriving future for the area and its people. We will work in partnership with others in the AONB, seeking to reflect and implement the plan in all our activities affecting the area.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alwyn Davies'.

Cllr. Alwyn Davies *Worcestershire County Council*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Eccles'.

Cllr. Bob Eccles *Gloucestershire County Council*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Edwards'.

Cllr. Phil Edwards *Herefordshire Council*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Hobman'.

Cllr. Bill Hobman *Forest of Dean District Council*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Moore'.

Fiona Moore *West Midlands Regional Director for the Countryside Agency*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Raine'.

Cllr. John Raine *Malvern Hills District Council*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Felton'.

Mark Felton *West Midlands Regional Director of English Nature*

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I INTRODUCTION

A Special Landscape

There is no doubt that the Malvern Hills' landscape has a grandeur and natural beauty of national importance that justifies its designation as an AONB. Its designation serves to conserve and enhance that natural beauty and in doing so, recognises the variety of landscapes and their rich biodiversity, and the historic environment.

The Malvern Hills Conservators, under whose jurisdiction the main hills and commons are, first proposed the formation of the AONB half a century ago, and in 1959 the Malvern Hills were designated an AONB. It is the eighth smallest AONB in the area, comprising 105 square kilometres, extending 20 kilometres in length and only 9 kilometres

pastoral farmland of the Severn Vale to the east, and less dramatically from the lush rolling landscape of Herefordshire to the west.

I.1 Definition of Natural Beauty

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. However, in pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.



Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met insofar as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry, and other uses.

at its widest point. The AONB straddles the borders of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, but unites the counties in their care for the designation. The designation, together with its staff unit gives a national dimension to a nationally important landscape.

The variety of landscapes in the AONB is one of its main attributes. The distinctive, narrow ridge running from north to south, thrusts unexpectedly from the patchwork of

While the principle of scenic value remains important today, the definition and understanding of natural beauty has continued to develop.

The notion of natural beauty as originally defined in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 was largely driven by the romantic ideas of scenic value which prevailed through the early part of the 20th Century.

The Countryside Act 1968 expanded the definition to include flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features, while the Environment Act 1995 again widened the definition to also include wildlife and cultural heritage. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 has also added the importance of biodiversity when considering natural beauty.



British Camp from Eastnor Park

The developing science of Landscape Character Assessment Guidance (Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland CAX84 2002) has also further developed our understanding of natural beauty, principally through the concept of landscape value. Recent Government Guidance on landscape character recommends that when considering natural beauty attention should be given to the following facets:

- intactness of landscape quality and the condition of elements
- visual appeal of scenic quality
- presence of rare features and elements
- representation of landscape character
- presence of conservation and cultural interests
- presence of wilderness character
- associations with people and events in history

- tranquillity or the presence of low levels of built development, traffic, noise, artificial lighting.

Reflecting this approach, a Landscape Assessment (The Malvern Hills Landscape 1993 CCP 425) for the Malvern Hills AONB produced by Landscape Design Associates, for the former Countryside Commission, drew on a wide range of landscape factors including geology, soils, landform, land use, settlement, flora and fauna, historical and literary associations together with its long tradition of public access to build a detailed picture of the intrinsic value of the AONB landscape.

The enduring importance of the Malvern Hills as a distinctive landscape, has also been confirmed by the national Countryside Character map (Countryside Character Vol 5 1999 CA11), produced by the Countryside Agency and English Nature, which considers the influence of cultural, ecological, historical and physical factors in producing 159 distinctive English landscape areas. The initiative identified 'Character Area 103: Malvern Hills', which is remarkably similar to the current AONB boundary.

Similarly, English Nature's larger Natural Areas mapping, principally driven by physical influences, identifies 'Natural Area 57: Malvern Hills and Teme Valley', which although larger, shares some of the AONB boundaries.

In June 2000 Local Government Minister Nick Raynsford confirmed in a response to a Parliamentary question that the Government accepts that the landscape qualities of National Parks and AONBs are equivalent, and therefore the level of protection given to both types of Protected Landscape by the land use planning system should be equivalent.

Recent government guidance specifically on AONBs provides a useful non-technical definition:

"Natural Beauty" is not just about the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries'.

(AONBs A guide for AONB partnership members 2001 CA24).

Regional Context

Along with Malvern Hills, Shropshire Hills and parts of the Cotswolds and Wye Valley, AONBs cover just 9.2% of the West Midlands Region.

Based on the 13,004 sqkm of West Midlands

AONBs	1 196.775 sqkm	9.20%
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National Park	206.000 sqkm	1.58%
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Protected Landscape	1 402.775 sqkm	10.79%
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The West Midlands is the only English region without a single National Park. This absence together with the relatively small area of regional AONB coverage places additional pressures on the protected landscape resource.

Fog over Suckley Hills



National Context

There are currently 50 AONBs in the UK, 37 in England, 4 in Wales and 9 in Northern Ireland.

The Association of AONBs, of which Malvern Hills AONB is a member, represents the AONB on a national basis.



Harvest in Mathon

International Context

The Malvern Hills AONB also has an international dimension and importance. The IUCN – The World Conservation Union – recognises AONBs as Category V Protected Landscapes. Protected Landscapes are areas recognised for the special quality of the natural environment, whilst also being important for the people that live and depend on the landscape for tourism and recreation.

Following the IV World Parks conference at Caracas (1992), the IUCN Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA) recommended that Protected Areas be guided by management plans with a strong emphasis for partnerships and provided with adequate funding by governments.

1.2 Role of the Management Plan

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000, it is now a statutory responsibility for local authorities to produce management plans for AONBs. To assist in this process the Countryside Agency has produced a guide entitled 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans (CA23)'. The aim

of a management plan is to conserve the special qualities of the AONB, manage the pressures upon them, and where appropriate, improve the AONB for the present and future generations of residents and visitors. A secondary responsibility for the AONB Partnership is the economic and social well being of the local community.

The plan recognises that conservation of the AONB is already the aim of statutory planning policy at all levels, and that a wide range of organisations, landowners and individuals are actively pursuing AONB conservation on a daily basis. The focus of this management plan is to support, encourage and help implement the objectives and actions contained in local authority policy that can give the AONB added protection and improvement to its special qualities. On occasions, the Management Plan may well be a material consideration in the

determination of future planning applications, where it has a bearing on land use and development matters.

The first management plan for the Malvern Hills AONB was published in 1996, and the broad aim of this second plan is to ensure continuity and consistency of management of the AONB's special qualities over the next five years.

The AONB management plan is intended to be of help to a broad range of people – in particular those organisations and individuals involved in managing land within the AONB, but also those wishing to become more informed about the AONB and its management. Participation in the preparation of the plan has sought to involve a wide range of organisations and this plan reflects their input with regard to information about the Malvern Hills AONB and aspirations for its future.

1.3 Governance Structure of the AONB

The governing structures of the AONB have been reviewed in 2003, but have yet to be approved for 2004, so what follows explains the current situation at the time of writing.

Currently, the AONB is governed by the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), composed mainly of elected representatives. The JAC receives recommendations from the Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP). This is composed of officers who provide the technical expertise to advise the AONB.

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MANAGEMENT PLAN — SEPTEMBER 1996 —

The 1996 Management Plan

The TOWP advises on ideas put forward by the Steering Group. The steering group is composed of the major funding partners.

1.4 Role of other Plans

A considerable level of protection for the natural beauty of the AONB is already provided for in national, regional and local planning policies (see Appendix I for Local Plan Policies). The management plan contains objectives and proposed actions that are particular to the principles of the AONB's designation, which will further assist the implementation of already established policies and objectives. The AONB management plan will be expected to fulfil

its purposes alongside and in conjunction with other organisations. In particular this includes the local authorities and major landowners such as the Malvern Hills Conservators, Bromsberrow and Eastnor Estates. The management plan should address those environmental, economic and social issues which are of mutual concern.

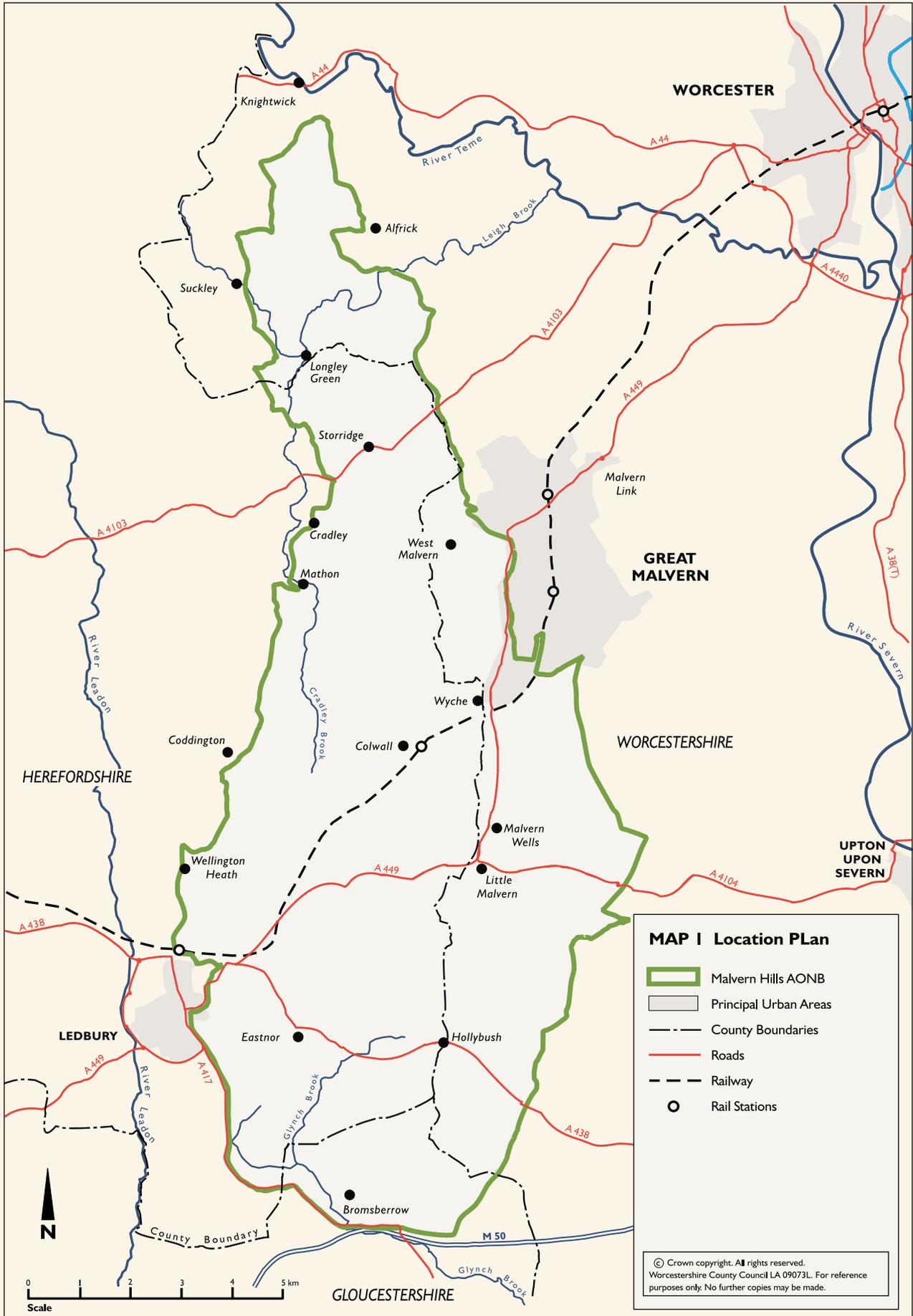
Whilst there are particular local and unique needs and problems to be addressed within the AONB with regard to transport and housing, these issues are the subject of other plans, documents and strategies, many of which have a statutory and funding basis to address those issues. Development, transport, tourism and recreation and housing are addressed in this plan in terms of their implications for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB, which is its primary purpose. The relevant plans and documents which deal with the wider issues are referred to where relevant in the Plan text.

1.5 Malvern Hills Conservators

Under the Malvern Hills Parliamentary Acts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Malvern Hills Conservators undertake a statutory role in pursuit of 5 primary objectives, for example preventing encroachment, and keeping the Hills open and undeveloped for the benefit of recreation and the public. The Conservators' role is separate from but complementary to that of the AONB partnership. Land under their jurisdiction extends to a significant 11% of the AONB. They are one of the five major partners in the AONB Partnership and are one of the oldest conservation bodies in the United Kingdom. The Malvern Hills Conservators' management plan is, in this respect, a particularly important document to be referred to in the context of the AONB and its management, and the strategies and objectives in both Management Plans should be complementary and work towards the same vision for the future of the AONB.

Ticket takings from Conservator's car parks go towards conserving the hills





1.6 Consultation and Comments

Participation of the local community of the AONB is a major consideration of the Management Plan review process, particularly in helping to identify those features that are valued most by, and the issues of greatest concern to the local community.

A photograph based community consultation exercise, the Jigsaw Project 2001, was conducted through the 18 Parish Councils of the AONB, who submitted photographs identifying which features and issues were significant to them within the AONB.

Results demonstrated that the following issues were important to the local parish communities:

- the built environment, especially community buildings, bridges;
- use of the AONB for recreation;

- 'old fashioned' standard orchards, trees, parkland, field patterns, community green spaces;
- features in the landscape such as post boxes, fences and signs, street furniture;
- general views;
- quiet lanes.

Existing data sets and consultation exercises (post 1996) were also reviewed (Centre for Rural Research, Analysis of Consultation Data for Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan 2002) to provide an understanding of what is valued and what is of concern to the residents and visitors in the AONB. These data sets include:

- Malvern Hills District Council Community Plan



A local youth group discuss issues in the AONB

- Dean by Definition (Forest of Dean photographic consultation exercise)
- Cradley Parish Plan
- Cradley Planning for Real Exercise
- Ledbury Market Town Health Check
- Herefordshire Citizens Panel
- Colwall Village Design Statement

Also providing base data from sources such as DEFRA, was the Malvern Hills AONB Statistical Digest commissioned by the Countryside Agency. Analysing records over a number of years, this was particularly useful in highlighting trends such as the decline in cattle, sheep and farm workers over the period.

The analysis of this data helped to inform the work of topic groups. Three groups were set up to contribute to the topics of Planning and Development, Landscape and Farming, and Tourism and Leisure. Meanwhile each Parish Council in the AONB was visited and invited to offer comments on the process and the forthcoming plan.

Following this analysis, a draft management plan was published for consultation in Spring 2003, mainly with those organisations and landowners and land managers with key interests in the AONB. However members of the public were invited to comment and were given access to the plan through the AONB office and public libraries.

Consideration has been given to all comments received in reaction to the draft management plan, and individual responses to all comments received have been made in a consultation audit.

A planning for real exercise in Cradley



1.7 Structure of the Plan

The plan adopts a structure in which each section relates to that which comes before and that which comes after. It is divided into the following sections:

- **Special Qualities:** these broadly define what make the area special.
- **Vision:** this expounds the general aspirations for the AONB.
- **Special Features:** these generally are physical features in the landscape and specific attributes.
- **Key Issues and Threats:** here, the issues and threats to the Special Features are analysed.
- **Strategic Objectives:** this deals with management prescriptions of the issues and threats to the Special Features.
- **Action Plan:** this consists of specific actions on the ground to deliver the prescriptions in the Strategic Objectives.

- **Monitoring:** this section identifies indicators that can be used to track the condition of the AONB.

Throughout the plan there are various cross cutting themes that influence many of the special features. These are outlined in the Linked Issues section.

