



The AONB Partnership is financially supported by Natural England, Herefordshire Council, Worcestershire County Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Forest of Dean District Council.

The majority of the resources available to the AONB Partnership come from Central Government – in recognition of the national importance of the AONB.

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## Caring for the AONB

**The AONB Partnership** - Local authorities, government bodies, parish councils, landowners, communities and voluntary groups are all represented on a local AONB Partnership. The AONB Partnership is the only body that has responsibility for the AONB as a whole. The Partnership does not own or manage any land directly. It was established to support those who do, and to provide strategic direction and co-ordination for the area as a whole. Key roles of the AONB Partnership include:

- Providing resources to support partner projects that conserve and enhance the AONB.
- Helping to secure major sources of external funding e.g. almost £1m for the Malverns Heritage Project.
- Producing a management plan that sets out a vision for the area and a programme for how to conserve and enhance its special features.
- Monitoring progress with the implementation of this plan.
- Providing grants to local projects that support sustainable development in the area.
- Monitoring the changing condition of the AONB.
- Raising awareness and promoting best practise in caring for the area

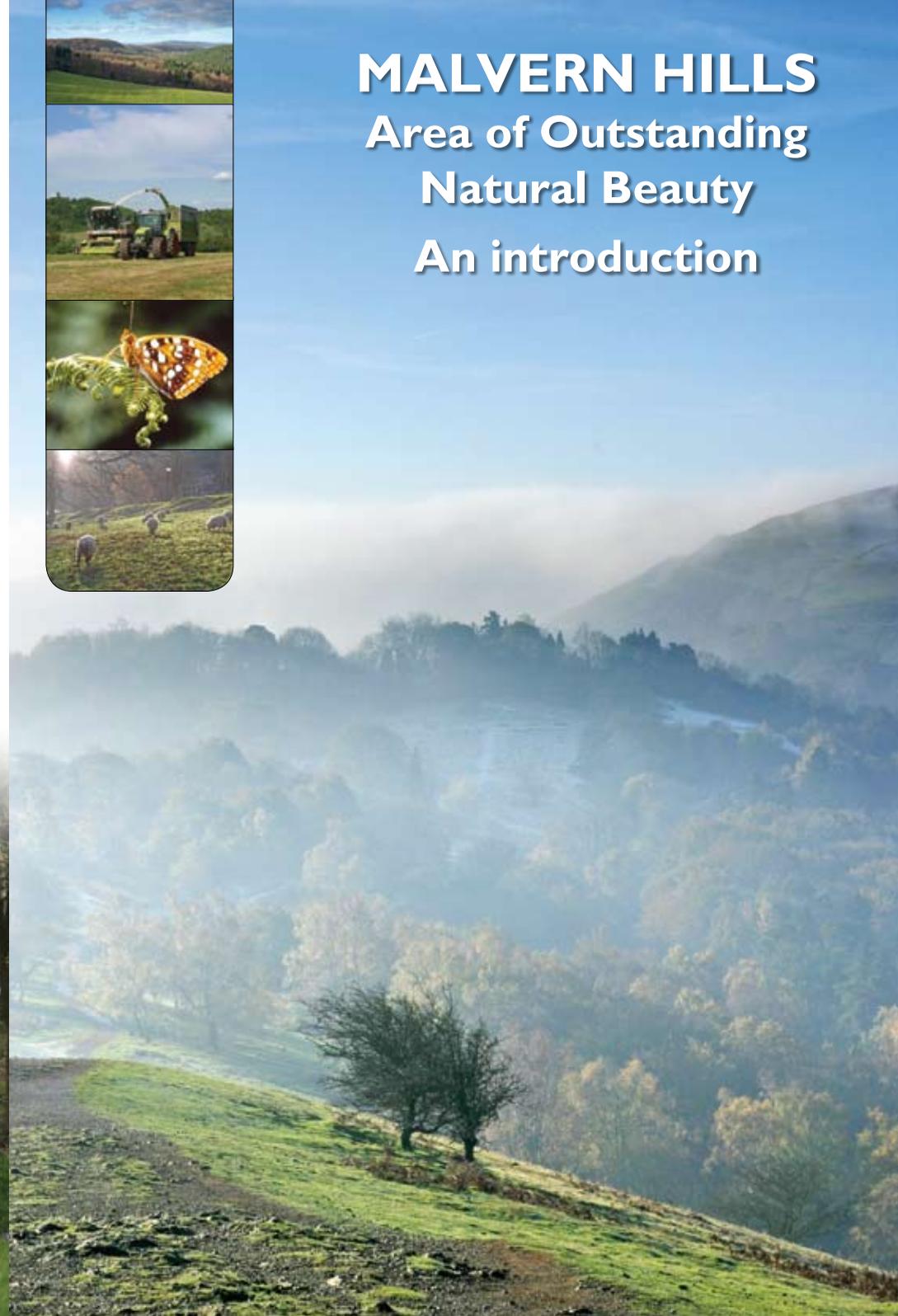
**Land owners and managers** – land within the AONB is owned by a wide range of individuals and groups and managed for many different purposes. These owners and managers are the primary guardians of the area. **Eastnor Estate** is the largest landowner in the area with 5000 acres. **The Malvern Hills Conservators** are the public body charged under Acts of Parliament (1884 – 1995) with looking after the Malvern Hills and commons for the conservation of wildlife and the enjoyment of the public (see map). The role of the Conservators is different from the more strategic focus of the AONB Partnership. However, the Conservators are represented on the AONB Partnership and help to steer its work. Both bodies have conservation of the natural environment at heart and work together in pursuit of shared objectives.



# MALVERN HILLS

## Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

### An introduction



## What is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)?

An AONB is a nationally designated area whose distinctive character and natural beauty is so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it.

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. 'Natural beauty' is taken to include geology, climate, soils, plants, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it.

There are 40 AONBs in England and Wales covering approximately 15% of the land area. Other AONBs in the region include the Cotswolds, Wye Valley, and Shropshire Hills.

The landscapes of AONBs are equal in value to those of the National Parks and command the same levels of planning protection.

Almost all public bodies have a legal duty to have regard to the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.



The area was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1959.

The AONB covers 105 square kms. It is 20kms long and 9kms at its widest point.

The Malvern Hills AONB includes parts of Herefordshire (58.5% of the AONB), Worcestershire (35.8%) and Gloucestershire (5.7%) within its boundaries.

The AONB includes almost all of the land owned and managed by the Malvern Hills Conservators. This constitutes 11% of the total area of the AONB (see map).

The population of the AONB is estimated to be 12,200 people.

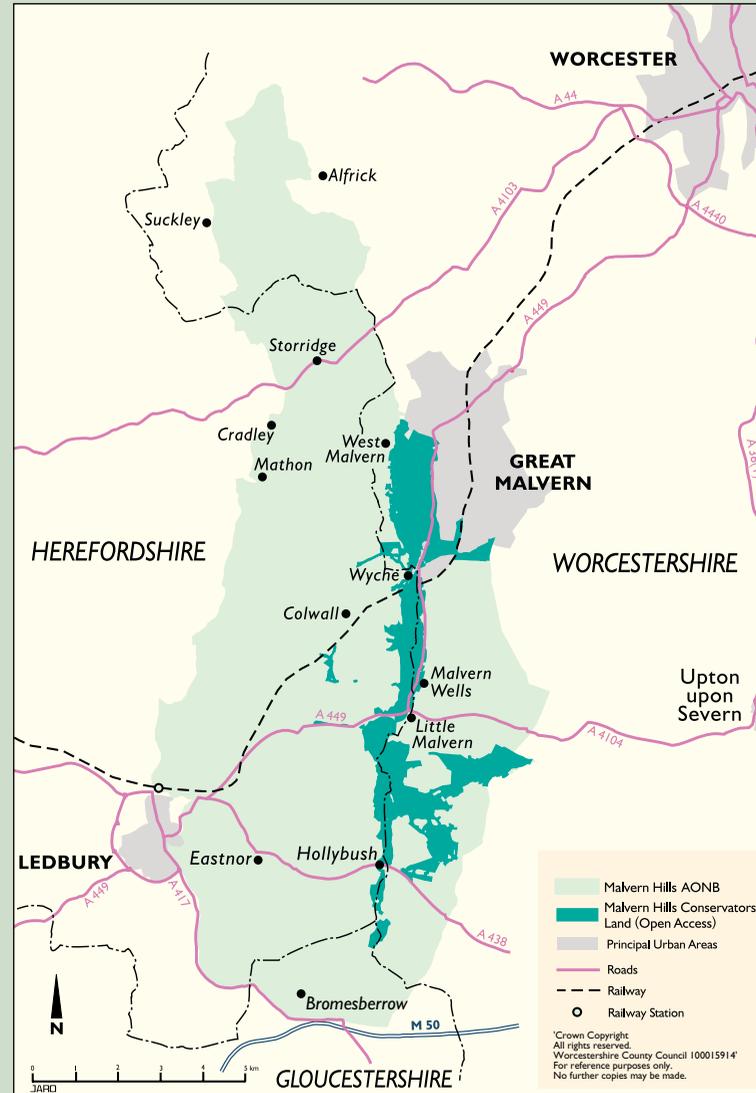
The AONB landscape is highly varied. 10 different landscape character types can be recognised, from the flat, sandy estate lands in the south to the high hills and slopes of the Malvern Hills themselves.

Almost 54% of the AONB is permanent grassland with crops and fallow land accounting for 23%. Just over 8% of the area is woodland.

55% of all land holdings in the AONB are used for livestock production.



## The Malvern Hills AONB



The geology of the AONB is of international importance, being part of the Abberley and Malvern Hills European Geopark. The area also contains 41 Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS).

The AONB contains 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest including the largest in the West Midlands. These sites account for 10.9% of the AONB.

The area is famous for its spring water which led to the rapid growth of Malvern in the Victorian era.

Almost 1.25 million people visit the area each year.

The AONB has a rich cultural heritage and contains ancient monuments from the Iron Age to the Medieval period. More recently the Victorians left their mark on the area with quarries, carriage drives and gas lamps.

The AONB contains 339 listed buildings and 2 listed parks and gardens.

