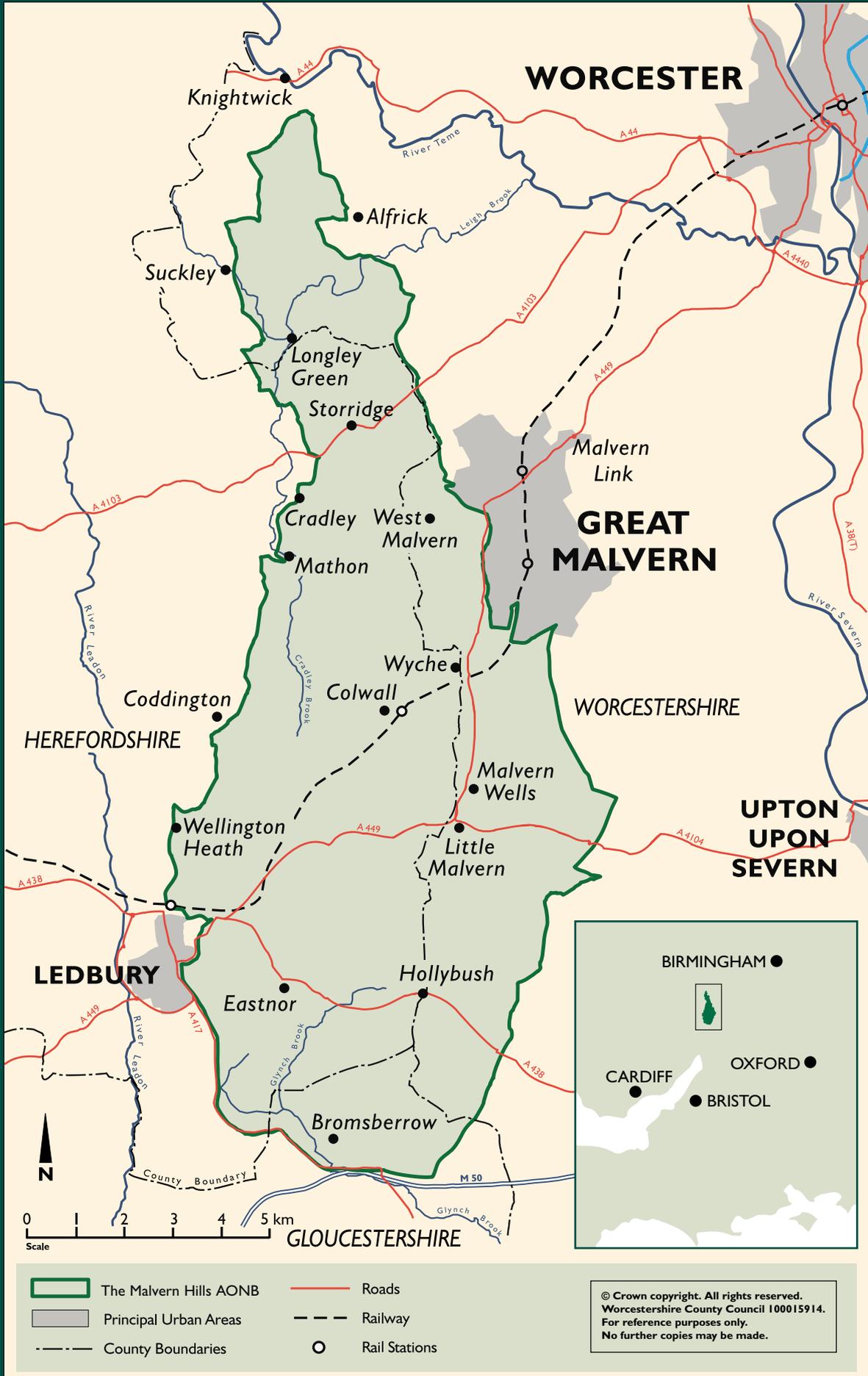


Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-2014



Location of the Malvern Hills AONB



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Chairman's foreword



Bryan Smith

"Future generations will enjoy ... the quality experiences, the positive economic spin-offs, the local pride and the many other advantages that come from being associated with one of Britain's finest Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty."

This management plan has been produced following widespread consultation. Published under the banner of the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, it deals with a wide range of issues and activities affecting this special part of England.

I hope that the plan will inspire and guide all who live and work in the area, as well as those who visit it, those who own and manage the land, and everyone with an interest in conserving and enhancing its natural beauty.

This plan is published at a time of great financial difficulty. In such circumstances, the long-term conservation of the Malvern Hills AONB could easily slip. After all, conservation seldom brings any quick economic returns, is unlikely to attract many votes and to some people just seems to consume taxpayers' and landowners' money.

It is of course for exactly these reasons that an agreed plan is so important at this time. If we let things slip now, future generations will not look back with tolerance. On the other hand if we all embrace the fine ideals of this plan and do our very best to deliver them in spite of the current financial storm, future generations will enjoy all of the benefits that we enjoy – the quality experiences, the positive economic spin-offs, the local pride and the many other advantages that come from being associated with one of Britain's finest Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

I encourage you to adopt this plan as your own and to work with us to ensure its delivery.



Chairman of the Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee

*As members of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) we commend and endorse this management plan.**

Chairman Bryan Smith

Malvern Hills Conservators

Vice Chairman John Raine

Malvern Hills District Council

Chris Cheeseman

Malvern Hills District Council

Rees Mills

Herefordshire Council

Mary Cooper

Herefordshire Council

Diane Rayner

Worcestershire County Council

Reg Farmer

Worcestershire County Council

Richard Long

Forest of Dean District Council

Nicky Carless

Herefordshire Association of Local Councils

Jan Bowden

Worcestershire Association of Local Councils

Michael Allfrey

National Farmers' Union

James Hervey Bathurst

Country Landowners and Business Association

Arthur Lee

Herefordshire Local Access Forum

Frank Hill/David Ward

Campaign to Protect Rural England

Kelda White

Natural England

Tony Fleming

English Heritage

John Payne

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust

Peter Hands

Visit Herefordshire/Destination Worcestershire

Wayne Barnes

Forestry Commission

*Names of JAC members are followed by the organisations they represent.

1 Introduction

A summary of the special qualities of the Malvern Hills AONB

The AONB is most well-known for the Malvern Hills, a high ridge that is visible from the Severn Vale and from the rolling hills and valleys to the west. However, there are many other features that contribute to the area's special character:

- A distinctive and varied geology, with a mixture of granite, limestone, sandstones and marls. This gives rise to a unique array of landscapes and natural habitats.
- A wide variety of landscape types in a relatively small area. Assessments of the area's landscape character identify ten distinct landscape types. Woodland and grassland in varying mixes are the most prevalent.
- A distinctive combination of landscape elements including orchards, parklands, ridgelines, ponds, quarries, hedgerows and watercourses.
- A wide variety of wildlife habitats and species, many of which are nationally rare.
- A large number of sites that have been designated for their special characteristics. These include 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), one Local Nature Reserve and many other special and key wildlife sites.
- An historic landscape of ancient unenclosed commons, varied field boundary patterns and designed parks and gardens.
- A rich and distinctive historic environment including Bronze Age burial grounds, Iron Age hill forts, moated sites and industrial architecture.
- Distinctive villagescapes, including conservation areas, listed buildings and local features which define a 'spirit of place' in the settlements.
- Thriving communities with a low deprivation index that reflects the area's prosperity and the availability of employment.
- A history of recreation and tourism that continues today, with people coming to enjoy the hills, spas and the tranquillity of the rural landscapes.
- Open access in many places over the hills and commons, providing opportunities for bracing walks with fine views.

Towards the Malvern Hills from Grittlesea



The purpose of AONB designation

The primary purpose of designation as an AONB is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Legislation states that in pursuing this 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 which in themselves conserve the environment;
- 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.

The meaning of the term 'natural beauty' has evolved since AONBs were first proposed under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949). Section 99 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) provides an up-to-date legislative reference. Recent government guidance provides the following interpretation of natural beauty:

'The natural beauty of AONBs encompasses everything - 'natural' and human - that makes an area distinctive: geology, climate, soil, plants, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it.' (Countryside Agency, 2001).

What is an AONB management plan?

The purpose of a management plan is to help all those involved in managing the AONB to:

- conserve its special qualities;
- manage the pressures on these qualities; and
- where possible, improve the AONB for current and future generations of people who live in and visit the area.

The plan provides important guidance to all those organisations and individuals involved in managing land in the area, as well as those who live and work there and who have an interest and involvement in the AONB.

This management plan has been produced following a detailed review of the previous AONB management plan (which covered 2004-2009). The plan incorporates the views of local people, as well as a range of public, private and voluntary sector bodies. This engagement helped to bring to light the challenges facing the AONB and to determine priorities for action over the next five years.



Oast houses
at Mathon

Who is responsible for the AONB management plan?

The legal duty to produce and review this management plan lies with the area's local authorities. Under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), this management plan formulates local authority policy for the management of the Malvern Hills AONB and for the carrying out of local authority functions in relation to that policy.

Implementation of the management plan is in the hands of the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership. The Partnership comprises all those bodies and individuals who work together to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB. The Partnership achieves much through informal joint working with individuals, businesses and communities.

The Partnership's work is overseen by the AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). This Committee is made up of representatives of government agencies, local authorities, public bodies and a range of non-governmental organisations. The JAC has a formal responsibility to oversee and co-ordinate implementation of the management plan.



Autumn Show, Malvern Showground

How does the management plan fit with the policies and plans of others?

National, regional and local policies already provide a considerable level of protection for the natural beauty of the AONB. In addition, many other issues that affect the area – such as the management of transport, tourism, recreation and biodiversity – are dealt with in individual strategies and plans prepared by a wide range of partner organisations.

The intention is that the AONB management plan is informed by these policies, plans and strategies and is implemented alongside and in conjunction with them. It is also expected that this management plan will influence the preparation and delivery of key policies, plans and processes affecting the area. This would cover, for example, Local Development Frameworks and other planning documents, Local Area Agreements and Sustainable Community Strategies.

The **Malvern Hills Conservators** is a major partner in the AONB Partnership. One of the oldest conservation bodies in the UK, the Conservators is a public body charged under Acts of Parliament to look after the Malvern Hills and commons for the conservation of wildlife and the enjoyment of the public. Its role is separate from, but complementary to, that of AONB designation. Land under their jurisdiction extends to a significant 11% of the AONB. The Malvern Hills Conservators' management plan is therefore a particularly important document in the context of the AONB and its management.

This AONB management plan supports and emulates the 'Ecosystem Services' approach that Defra is developing. This approach aims to achieve sustainable use of ecosystem products and services through the wise use of natural resources within defined limits.



Midsummer Hill taken from Pinnacle Hill

Which common issues run throughout the management plan?

A number of cross-cutting issues are central to this management plan and to its implementation.

Sustainability

Sustainability is about making sure that our actions today do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Integrated management of the AONB should take full account not only of the environment but also of social and economic issues. This will ensure that any potential impacts conserve and enhance, rather than compromise, these vital resources.

Rural land use and activities, and development

Landscape elements within the AONB, such as hedgerows, field size, woodlands and tree cover, are influenced as much by man as they are by nature. The land use practices that helped create these elements have changed dramatically over recent years, particularly in farming. These practices will continue to shape the integrity and quality of the character of the AONB's landscape, and its ability to support biodiversity.

Agricultural change can lead to a decline in the quality of the landscape but it can also enhance the character of an area. Agri-environment schemes are now directing financial support for farmers to retain and enhance traditional character. Partnership working – involving landowners and managers, residents, visitors and relevant organisations – can help to achieve this effectively.

Climate change

Global warming, as a result of increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, has become a serious consideration for all policy makers. Although the long-term effects of climate change are not clear, the likely results are changing weather patterns and rising average sea temperatures. Long-term changes could radically alter the environment of the AONB, including its landscape and biodiversity. Management of the AONB will need to address these changes by helping to reduce carbon emissions (mitigation) and by supporting environmental adaptations to changing conditions (adaptation).

Awareness of the AONB

The Malvern Hills AONB Visitor Survey, which was undertaken in 2000, found that more than 90% of respondents had heard of the term 'AONB' but that only around 20% understood the purpose of the designation. Community projects, press articles and projects with partners all help to raise the profile of the AONB among residents and visitors. However, there is still a need to raise awareness of its value and its potential for conserving, protecting and enhancing the area.



Paragliding off the Malvern Hills

How is the management plan structured?

The management plan is presented in two main sections, which cover:

- the natural and historic environment, and
- sustainable communities.

Each section begins with a vision of the AONB in 20 years' time. It then sets out a number of chapters on separate but related themes. The chapters all include the following elements:

- background information;
- special features – the physical elements and features of the landscape and any specific attributes;
- key issues – the issues and threats to these special features;
- guiding principles – these are provided to clarify the AONB Partnership's position on the key issues, and to identify where there is a perceived need to influence others, for example in the development of policy;
- strategic objectives – a range of management prescriptions and intentions relating to the key issues.

Each guiding principle and strategic objective is given a reference number. The numbers are used within the text to illustrate links between key issues and specific principles or objectives.

Two further documents are important in relation to the management plan.

- An action plan, to be produced every year, which outlines the work that will be done to achieve the strategic objectives outlined here.
- A 'State of the Malvern Hills AONB report' which records the condition of the AONB's special features in 2009. This document provides a baseline from which the success of the management plan can be measured.

... this diversity of form, habitats and built heritage has a very special quality.



Eastnor Castle

2 The natural and historic environment

Introduction

The Malvern Hills AONB is a landscape of great physical, ecological and historical diversity. From the open grasslands of the northern Malvern Hills with their magnificent views, to the mosaics of pasture, woodland and scattered settlements, this diversity of form, habitats and built heritage has a very special quality.

Geology is at the heart of the area's natural beauty. For such a small area, the AONB has a remarkable geodiversity resource including classic geological formations and sites. The varied geology gives rise to a diversity of soil types which, in turn, underlie a range of wildlife habitats.

The AONB is known for wildlife habitats as diverse as acidic and lowland limestone grasslands and mixed broadleaved woodlands. Traditional standard orchards, historic parkland and veteran trees, together with ponds, streams and marshes, add to the variety of habitats. Several habitats are nationally rare and some are protected as SSSIs.

The historic environment of the AONB is a fundamental part of its uniqueness. It is the legacy of centuries of human activity and culture in complex layers, and the rich and diverse historical record that contributes significantly to the area's landscape, sense of place and identity.

Farming and forestry, the most important uses of the land over thousands of years, have shaped and influenced the unique character of the Malvern Hills AONB. They have also traditionally been the economic bedrock of the rural communities, supporting livelihoods and providing local foods and products.

These components of the AONB – its landscape, geology, biodiversity and historic environment – and the forces that have moulded and changed their form over thousands of years, have a strong inter-dependence. Many of the elements of the landscape are determined by their geology and have an intrinsic wildlife importance and/or an historic environment significance.

For example, unenclosed commons in the east of the AONB are underpinned by nutrient poor soils derived from gravels that were originally eroded from the Malvern Hills. The poor soils helped to ensure that the commons escaped agricultural enclosure. As a result, these areas have now been managed in the same way for hundreds of years. They are largely unimproved and are therefore of great value for wildlife. They are also important historical features of the landscape – a living testament to traditional agricultural practices and a distinctive way of life.

The following chapters consider these resources and their management under separate themes:

- **landscape,**
- **biodiversity,**
- **geodiversity,**
- **historic environment, and**
- **farming and forestry.**

In reality, these themes are strongly inter-related, with many of the issues affecting one topic also impacting on others.

Similarly, there is growing recognition that land management and the solutions to problems on the ground must be integrated. For example, new agri-environment support mechanisms such as Higher Level Stewardship and the English Woodland Grant Scheme help land managers to support biodiversity objectives, and to protect and enhance traditional and historic landscape features whilst also helping to manage land in a more environmentally sensitive manner. The European Landscape Convention encourages a joined-up approach in all areas of land use, development and management.

Many of the principles and objectives identified in this management plan are informed by a common approach. They recognise the importance of the distinctive character of the AONB while accepting change, and pursue land management practices that protect and enhance the environment while supporting the socio-economic needs of local people.

There is growing recognition that land management and the solutions to problems on the ground must be integrated.

Little Malvern Priory



The distinctive character of villages is sustained by high standards of development.



Cattle at Castlemorton Common

A vision for 2030

Landscape

- Interlocking, native broadleaved woodlands dominate the limestone ridges and valleys to the north and west.
- The pattern of medieval settlement and parkland west of the central and southern hills is sustained and reinforced.
- The framework of regular, enclosed commons in the east is maintained, with open farmland clearly divided by healthy native hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- The grasslands of the high north-south granite ridge are kept open, grazed and predominantly free of scrub.
- Change in the landscape is accepted and its impacts accommodated through positive management. However, the landscape largely comprises broadleaved woodland and grassland, interconnected with hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

Natural environment

- Ancient rock formations are preserved, accessible and well-managed.
- Wildlife thrives in the grasslands on the open hills, bracken slopes, commons and meadows.
- Ancient, native and semi-natural woodlands are managed sustainably and yield economic benefits and a flourishing biodiversity.
- Native hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide a widespread network of corridors.
- Traditional orchards, and veteran and field trees are important elements of the landscape.
- Streams, brooks and ponds are well-managed and host a diversity of life forms.
- All recognised key habitats are well-linked and join up with wildlife-friendly countryside, both within and outside the AONB.

Historic environment

- There is a rich, accessible and vividly illustrated record of the historic environment.
- Field patterns, monuments, historic parklands and buildings and their settings are well-conserved in the landscape.
- The distinctive character of villages is sustained by high standards of development.
- Distinctive features such as limekilns, hill forts, the Shire Ditch, castles and moats are protected, understood and enjoyed by residents and visitors.
- A myriad of old signs, wells and milestones enrich the country lanes.

Farming and forestry

- There is a profitable and buoyant farm economy.
- High-quality local produce such as cider and lamb helps to sustain small-scale mixed farm traditions.
- The woodland estate yields a constant supply of timber products that supports the local economy.
- Farmers, foresters and other land managers are actively engaged in conserving and restoring the area's special qualities.

Landscape

Background

The key landscape characteristics of each part of the AONB are well documented. Landscape character assessments (LCAs) provide an objective and comprehensive description of the landscape. LCAs have been prepared for the three counties of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire and these provide an objective and comprehensive description of the landscape. Ten rural landscape character types comprising 30 distinctive landscape description units (LDUs) have been identified within the AONB.

Worcestershire County Council operates a web-based planning tool to help district councils apply the LCA when considering planning applications. Herefordshire Council and Forest of Dean District Council have adopted their own LCAs as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) assessments have been completed for Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, and one is being prepared for Worcestershire (due for completion in 2010). The assessments provide a framework for describing and understanding how successive cultures have left their mark on the modern AONB landscape. The HLCs form a basis for further studies, such as detailed assessments of settlement patterns. They also enable those distinctive landscape areas and features that are not statutorily protected to become fully recognised in the planning system and in other land management processes.

LCAs and HLCs play a critical role in helping to inform policy making and land management activities. They also guide the development control process so that it reflects and strengthens the essential landscape character of the AONB. Achieving greater integration between these two tools will promote even better understanding and should help decision makers to deliver a more cohesive approach to land management within the AONB. There are opportunities to develop LCAs further; for example, by preparing community based studies.

The UK is a signatory to the European Landscape Convention (ELC). The ELC, which came into force in March 2007, encourages governments to identify and assess landscape types, with the active participation of communities, and to draw up programmes for their protection and management. The ELC defines landscape as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. It encourages a joined up approach in all areas of land use, development and management, including the recognition of landscape in law.

Round bales at Suckley



The AONB is characterised by a high diversity of landscape types in a relatively small area.

Special features

The high ridge of the Malvern Hills can be seen as an area of transition between the flat, planned countryside of the Severn Plain to the east and the more ancient countryside of rolling hills and valleys to the west. This contrast contributes to the distinctive character of the AONB. The AONB is characterised by a high diversity of landscape types in a relatively small area. The transition and connectivity between these landscapes is also an important characteristic. The key features of the AONB, derived from the LCAs, are as follows:

- The prominent steeply sloping principal ridge contrasting with the flat land to the east and south and the gently undulating hills to the west and north.
- Extensive areas of acid grassland and heath on the hill tops, with rough grazing.
- Mixed broadleaved woodland often of ancient origin on the lower hills and valleys in the north and west.
- Fields of pasture, bordered by hedgerows and often containing hedgerow trees.
- Formalised, enclosed commons in the east with regular hedgerow boundaries.
- Unenclosed commons to the south east with a strong sense of wildness.
- Arable fields to the south with regular hedged boundaries and straight roads.
- Scattered settlements and small wayside cottages, particularly by the commons.
- Far-reaching views from and towards the AONB.

Key issues

Data published by Natural England suggests that the essentially strong character of the Malvern Hills Joint Character Area was maintained between 1999 and 2003 (Countryside Quality Counts, 2006). Nevertheless, many forces for change that could impact on different landscapes within the AONB remain. These are identified in full in the county-based LCAs, but some of the key issues for the AONB are described below.

Changes in agriculture and forestry (LP1, LP2, L01, L02, L03, L05)

- Recent decades have witnessed a significant reduction in sheep and cattle grazing on the high hills and the common lands. This has led to more scrub, bracken and secondary woodland cover and a reduction in the amount of open grassland. Significant progress has been made to increase the quality and quantity of grazing activity in the past 10 years but more effort is required, especially on the northern and southern hills.
- In some areas the strong regular enclosure pattern has deteriorated and hedgerows and hedgerow trees have been lost or replaced by fencing. There is little restocking or regeneration of hedgerow trees to replace the predominantly mature trees that have been lost.



The Malvern Hills at sunrise

- There has been an increase in the use of polythene for intensive production of certain crops and this can be highly visible. There has also been an increase in polytunnels and the infrastructure associated with them around the borders of the AONB, especially to the south and west.
- Arable cultivation of the sandstone estate-lands in the south has led to a loss of traditional grasslands and a loss of hedgerows as fields have increased in size. There is evidence¹ that this trend has largely stopped, and indeed since 2000 has reversed, with an increased area of permanent grassland and a decrease in the cropped area. Global market changes, however, may lead to an increase in arable production at the expense of pasture, with consequent changes in the landscape.
- There has been an increase in horse and pony ownership with a corresponding growth of paddocks and associated equine infrastructure in some parts. This growth has often been at the expense of small pastures and has sometimes led to a degradation and loss of hedgerows, grassland and orchards.
- Woodland clearance and the gradual loss of trees along hedgerows and stream sides have damaged visual links between areas historically cleared and those still wooded. **(L02, L03)**
- Changing agricultural practices, such as growing soft fruit under polytunnels, and hotter drier summers may lead to an increase in the demand for surface water storage and other supporting infrastructure.



Polythene within the AONB

Development pressures

Data shows a gradual increase in the number of small farms in the AONB², probably as a result of the break-up of larger holdings. This break-up can result in the enlargement of extant properties and/or an increase in the demand for buildings and associated infrastructure (both residential and agricultural). It can also lead to a loss in linear habitats such as hedgerows. There is also potential for growth in the size of settlements around the AONB which will impact on views into and out of the area (see 'Views' below).

The growth of farm shops and diversification of farm buildings into non-agricultural businesses has meant that many agricultural buildings have taken on new lives and their traditional settings may have changed. These issues can all impact on the landscape with increased built development in both settlements and rural areas, a loss of local vernacular design and distinctiveness and 'higher' standards of highway management and road signing that can be out of character with the area. **(LP1, LP2, L03, L05, DP1, DP2)**

¹Statistical Digest for the Malvern Hills AONB', Centre for Rural Research (2003).

²An Evidence base for the Malvern Hills AONB', Centre for Rural Research (2007).

Looking east from the Malvern Hills across Castlemorton Common and the Severn Plain



A key characteristic of the AONB is the high visibility of its special landscapes.

Climate change

Although trends in climate change may be discernible, their local effect is unpredictable. Flooding, so prevalent in recent years, may encourage the reintroduction of water meadow management. Drier periods may increase the fire risk or help to accelerate erosion if followed by severe downpours. There is a risk of increased subsidence of gleyed soils while changes in vegetation patterns and agricultural land use may all impact on the visual appearance and character of the AONB. **(L04)**

Views

A key characteristic of the AONB is the high visibility of its special landscapes. The topography of the Malvern Hills means that all of the main landscape types are visible from the summit ridge, which also affords far-reaching views to the countryside beyond. Similarly, the Hills themselves provide a very visible and prominent focus, especially when viewed from the north and east. **(LP1, LP2, L02, L03, L06, D03)**

Guiding principles

- LP1** Change is inevitable in the landscape – it has been changing for thousands of years. However, change should be managed in a way that maintains and enhances the core elements of landscape character.
- LP2** Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisation should be used to improve understanding of the landscape and the processes of change within the landscape, and to inform decision-making and strategic planning.

Strategic objectives

- L01** Conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape elements and features identified in Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisations, particularly those that are most sensitive or have little capacity for change.
- L02** Restore distinctive landscapes and landscape features that have been significantly degraded.
- L03** Identify and promote opportunities for positive landscape change to landowners, managers, government and all those with an influence over land.
- L04** Undertake survey and research to better understand and monitor the condition, and rate of change, of landscape character within the framework of the Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisation.
- L05** Seek resources to promote landscape management and improvements.
- L06** Promote greater awareness and appreciation of the landscape attributes and character of the AONB among residents and visitors, providing opportunities for them to be involved in identifying and conserving locally distinctive features, views and landscapes.

Biodiversity

Background

There are many distinct habitat types within the AONB which support a rich and varied diversity of flora and fauna. Biodiversity is important in its own right as well as for the wider well-being of the human population. The variety and condition of habitats and species can be considered as indicators of the health of the environment.

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) exist for the UK and at county level. They provide a framework for identifying, conserving, enhancing and monitoring priority habitats and species. Lists of priority habitats and species are published by the UK government. The lists form the basis for prioritising conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

The AONB also contains important habitats and species that are not on national lists but are identified as local biodiversity priorities for action.

The variety and condition of habitats and species can be considered as indicators of the health of the environment.

Priority habitats and species

The list of habitats and species of principal importance in England is published by Defra (2008) under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. At the time of writing it contains 65 habitats and 1,149 species. Section 40 of the NERC Act places a duty on all public sector bodies to have regard to biodiversity in their work.

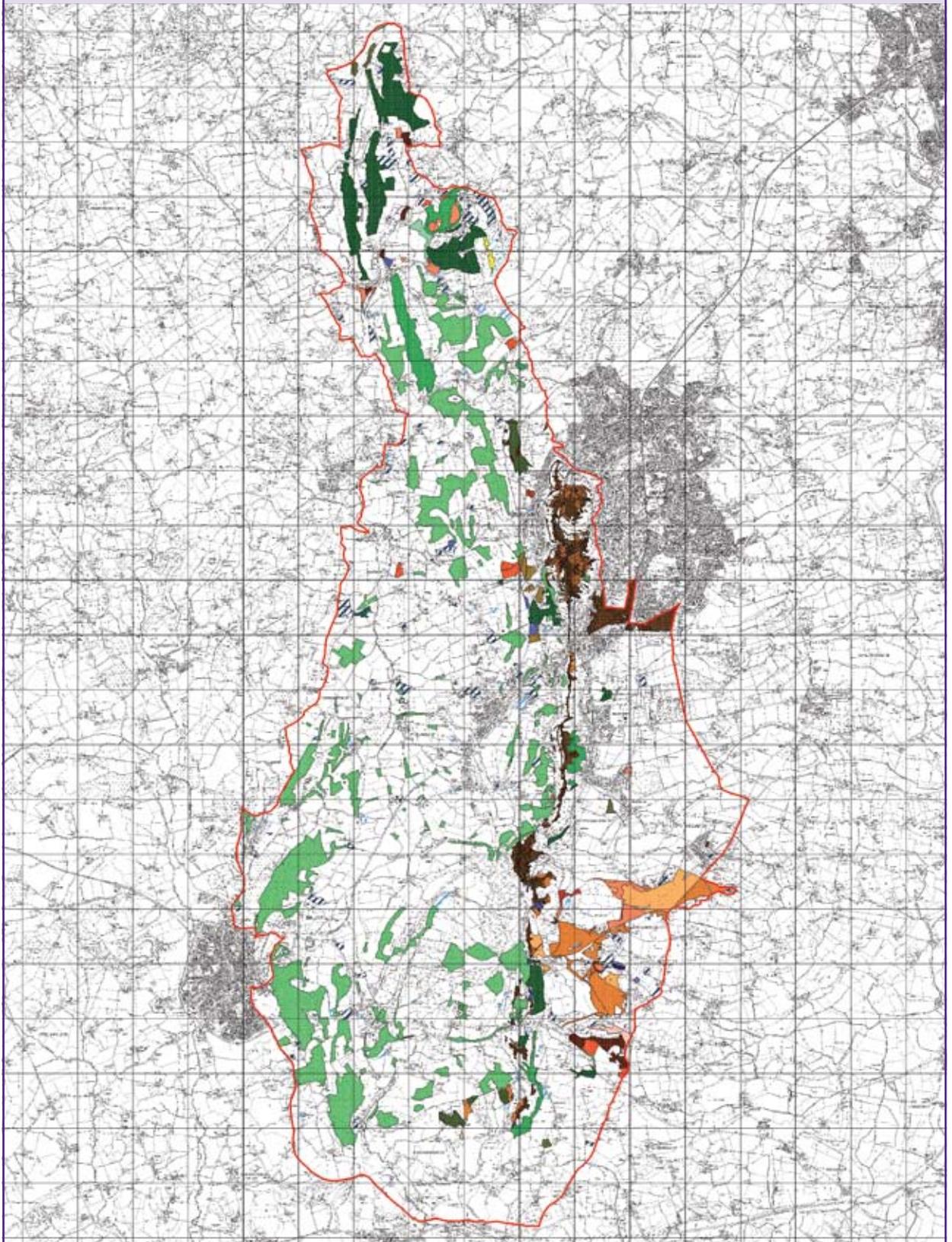
Special features

Key AONB habitats	UK BAP priority habitat	Key AONB species	UK BAP priority species
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Yes	Dormouse	Yes
Lowland dry acid grassland	Yes	Bats - Lesser Horseshoe Barbastelle Soprano Pipistrelle Bechsteins	Yes
Lowland calcareous grassland	Yes	Bullfinch	Yes
Lowland meadows	Yes	Skylark	Yes
Traditional orchards	Yes	Song Thrush	Yes
Wood pasture and parkland	Yes	Great Crested Newt	Yes
Veteran trees	No	High Brown Fritillary Butterfly	Yes
Rivers and streams	Yes	Black Poplar	No
Hedgerows and hedgerow trees	Yes	Polecat	Yes
Ponds	Yes	Barn Owl	No
Wet woodland	Yes	Adder	Yes
		Peregrine Falcon	No
		Noble Chafer	Yes



Noble Chafer

Distribution of BAP priority habitats in the Malvern Hills AONB



Priority habitats include:



Lowland mixed deciduous woodland



Lowland dry acid grassland



Traditional orchard

Based upon Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. (10024168) (2008).

Protected sites

There are 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) lying partly or wholly within the AONB. These represent 10.9% of its total area (11.45 square kms).

In 2006, 89% of the SSSI area was in 'favourable' or 'recovering' condition. This compares well with a figure of 71% of SSSI area reaching that condition in the West Midlands region as a whole. Data suggests that habitats in the AONB in unfavourable or declining condition include broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland, neutral grassland and calcareous grassland.³

There is one Local Nature Reserve within the AONB at St Wulstan's (Malvern Wells).

Non-statutory designation is afforded by Special and Key Wildlife Sites, identified by the respective County Wildlife Trusts and local authorities. In the Worcestershire part of the AONB there are 23 Special Wildlife Sites covering 501 ha. In the Herefordshire part there are 40 Special Wildlife Sites covering 1,773 ha. These local sites should provide a comprehensive suite founded on local biodiversity conservation priorities. They have a fundamental role to play in helping to fulfil local and UK BAP conservation targets.

In the Herefordshire Local Area Agreement, 'Improved Local Biodiversity Indicator 197' has been adopted as a priority indicator to help increase the proportion of local sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented.

Key issues

Information

Local BAPs for Herefordshire and Worcestershire were updated between 2006 and 2008, while the plan for Gloucestershire is due to be updated in 2009. These cover all land within the AONB and contain action plans for key habitats and species within the area. A range of surveys and inventories that provide different levels of information about the biodiversity resource in the area also exist. In 2008 all UK BAP priority habitats in the AONB were mapped.

Despite these recent advances, good quality, up-to-date and geographically specific information on wildlife and habitats is still lacking in certain areas. Such information is needed to inform decision-making in the land management and development control arenas. **(B05)**

Visitor pressure

The impact of visitor pressure can be acute in some parts of the AONB, and has led to the damage of some sensitive habitats. For example, walking, cycling and horse riding on the hills has eroded lowland acid grassland. Other potentially damaging activities include dog roaming (which can disturb wildlife), unrestricted parking, litter and fly-tipping. **(B02, B07)**



The rare High Brown Fritillary Butterfly



Bluebells

The impact of visitor pressure can be acute in some parts of the AONB, and has led to the damage of some sensitive habitats.

³State of the Malvern Hills AONB; AONB Partnership (2006).

Land management practices (agriculture and forestry)

The special wildlife of the AONB is closely related to its landscapes and centuries of farming and forestry traditions. Maintaining this wildlife and its habitats relies on good land management practices such as grazing, coppicing, orchard management and hedge laying. Current agri-environment support schemes attempt to promote conservation-minded practices on all farm holdings while seeking a more integrated approach to land management on the areas most valuable for biodiversity.

A reduction in grazing activity has been a major problem in recent decades, especially on the high hills and surrounding commons. As a result, these areas have suffered an increase in scrub cover and a decline in grassland condition and open bracken cover. In recent years significant progress has been made to increase grazing activity. Trends indicate that since 2000 there has been an increase in the area of permanent grassland and rough grazing and a decrease in the cropped area of the AONB. **(B01, B02, B03, B04, B07)**

Development

Insensitive development can lead to direct loss or have adverse impacts on biodiversity. For example the conversion of barns can disturb bat habitats, and some development may fragment wildlife corridors. However, the impact of this type of damaging development is reduced thanks to appropriate planning policies (including Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, and PPS 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation and Policies in Local Plans). Developer contributions and planning gain provide creative opportunities for development that can benefit wildlife, although monitoring may be required to make sure that adequate gain for wildlife is actually achieved. **(BP1, B01, B02, DP1)**

Problem species

Some species of plant and animals exist within the AONB at particular sites that are considered to be detrimental to the biodiversity of the AONB. Trees such as Sycamore and Ash have increased on the open hills with scrub and bramble encroachment, resulting in the decline of grassland habitats. Other plants such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, New Zealand Pygmy Weed, Common Ragwort and Giant Hogweed are all invasive species and can suppress native growth, particularly where management is not effective. Deer and grey squirrels also cause problems in places. **(B01, B02, B03, B05)**

Climate change

The potential change in habitat that results from alterations in weather patterns and temperature ranges is significant for the future of many species. This may affect not only their distribution but, for some, their very existence within the AONB. Lack of freezing conditions affects the germination of many native tree species. Changes in climate may isolate wildlife populations in their local habitats, making the presence of wildlife corridors even more important. Some species may also be unable to survive if climatic conditions are unfavourable at critical stages in their life cycles. Drier conditions may lead to increasing pressure on water resources, affecting the availability and quality of a vital commodity for all wildlife. The key issue facing the AONB, as for any area, is to develop a landscape that is resilient and adaptable to change. New scenarios for climate change are being developed that need to be factored into land management regimes. Opportunities include habitat creation in key areas to buffer or offset potential losses. **(B03, B06)**



Common spotted orchid in Suckley Woods

The key issue facing the AONB, as for any area, is to develop a landscape that is resilient and adaptable to change.

Habitat fragmentation and joined-up management

The management of key sites, including protected national and local sites, is important. Efforts should be made to secure appropriate management and monitoring so that sites are kept in good condition. However, greater effort also needs to be directed towards improving the biodiversity value of the areas between key sites. This should help to buffer key habitats, thereby increasing their resilience and connectivity. A 'landscape' scale approach is important within the AONB but should also be a consideration when looking outwards at land that adjoins the designated area. **(BP2, B03)**

...greater effort also needs to be directed towards improving the biodiversity value of the areas between key sites.

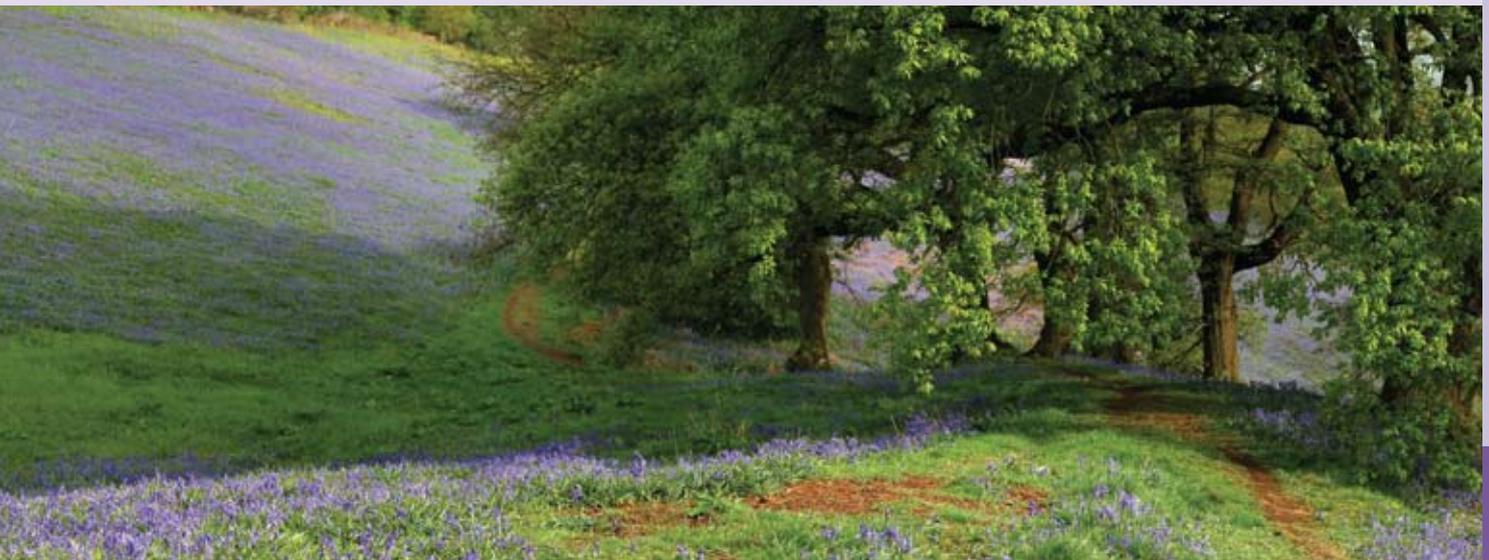
Guiding principles

- BP1** In exercising development control decisions, opportunities should be sought to positively enhance biodiversity; for example, through developer contributions.
- BP2** The fragmentation of key biodiversity habitats should be avoided and reversed.

Strategic objectives

- B01** Conserve, enhance and expand key habitats and populations of key species in line with local and UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and the England Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Framework.
- B02** Restore the condition of degraded habitats in line with local and UK BAPs.
- B03** Enhance the wildlife value of the countryside and achieve greater connectivity between key habitats within the AONB and between the AONB and the countryside beyond.
- B04** Ensure that 98% of all SSSI area is in favourable or recovering condition by 2014.
- B05** Undertake survey and research to secure and update information on the state of the AONB's biodiversity resources, leading to the identification of specific, geographically referenced targets for all UK BAP habitats and species by 2014.
- B06** Monitor climate change and interpret its effects on the presence and distribution of biodiversity in the AONB.
- B07** Promote greater understanding and enjoyment of the biodiversity resources of the AONB and the need for their protection and management.

Bluebells at Old Hollow



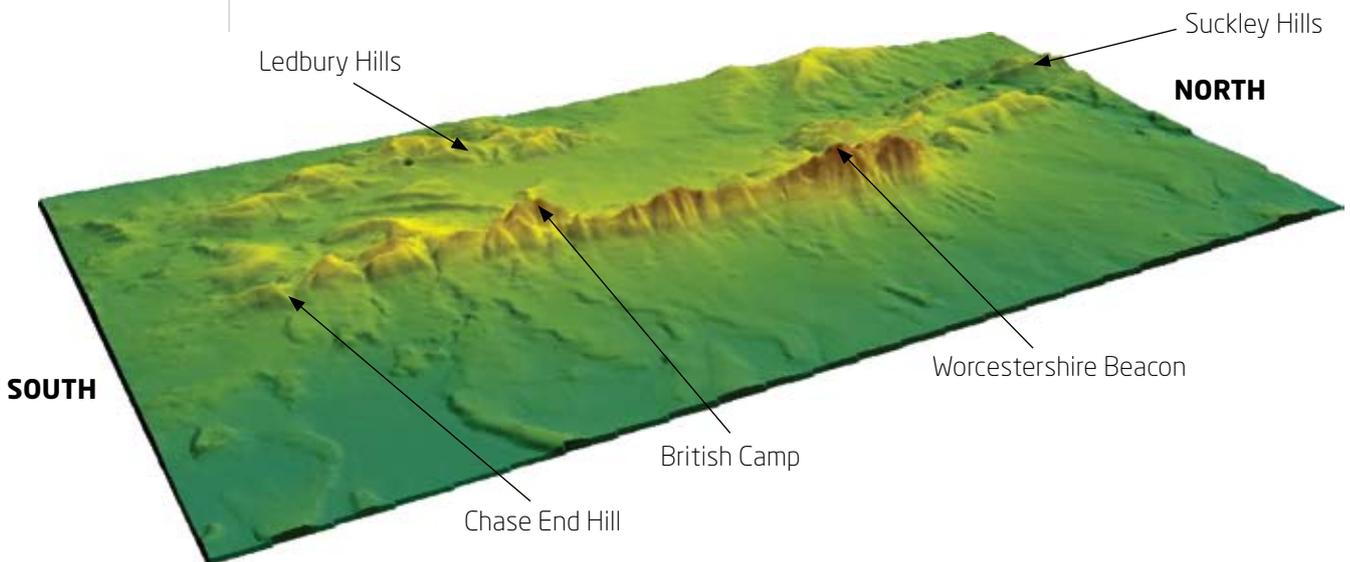
Geodiversity

Background

The striking nature of the scenery in the AONB is ultimately dependent on the rocks that lie beneath the ground surface – their shape, orientation and the range of mechanical and chemical properties they possess. It is the variation in these features that generates the wide range of landscape character types found in the AONB.

Geodiversity Action Plans provide a framework for identifying, conserving, enhancing and monitoring the geodiversity resource. Such Action Plans are currently being developed in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire and should cover all land in the Malvern Hills AONB by 2010.

Computer-generated aerial view showing geomorphology of the Malvern Hills AONB



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Special features

- Very hard igneous and metamorphic rocks that form the high ground of the Malvern Hills ridge and date from the Precambrian period (460-542 million years ago), including the eastern fault face.
- Silurian rocks, formed in a marine environment, that underpin the ridge and vale scenery (these include the Much Wenlock Limestone and the Ludlow Bone Bed).
- A complex and diverse range of soil types, giving rise to the varied habitats of the AONB.
- Distinctive landforms and river types, including the Leigh Brook, the Leddon and the brook at Gullet Quarry.
- An extensive network of ice age deposits including the Malvern gravels and lacustrine deposits around Malvern.
- Geological structures such as fault lines running across and along the Malvern Hills.

Key issues

Lack of knowledge, appreciation and understanding

As well as giving form to the landscape, geodiversity contributes to local distinctiveness and a sense of place. Its influence is seen in the local Malvern building stone, the limekilns of the area, and in springs and wells. The direct links between geology and landscape and between the natural and built environments are often poorly understood. **(G02, G03, G04)**

Threats to Local Geological Sites and other sites

There are 47 Local Geological Sites (LGS) (previously known as Regionally Important Geological Sites – RIGS) within the AONB. LGS and other sites can reflect the direct link between geology, wildlife and people. They are an underused educational resource providing opportunities for schools and groups as outdoor classrooms. Very few LGS are properly managed or regularly monitored to assess change in their condition. Loss of LGS arising from direct damage or neglect may result in the loss of unique exposures or features that are found nowhere else. **(GP1, G01)**

Visitor pressures

Sites of geological interest are, in places, under pressure from high visitor use. Sensitive sites with unique features such as Gullet Top Quarry regularly experience significant visitor pressure. **(G02, G03)**

RIGS and other sites within the AONB such as Whitman's Hill Quarry can be used to draw visitors away from honeypot sites to explore other parts of the area. These sites can be promoted positively, and interpreted, for geological exploration provided due consideration is given to health and safety issues. Geo-tourism is a potential growth sector which is encouraged by publicity for RIGS and other designations. **(GP2, G02)**

Land management operations and development

Insensitive development can lead to the direct loss of, or adverse effect on, geodiversity through the loss of designated sites or exposures. Sensitive development, on the other hand, can create temporary or even permanent exposures and features. At present little data is available on the extent of loss or damage to sites of geodiversity interest other than designated sites. Lost sites include part of Tank Quarry at the north end of the Malvern Hills (which has been used for landfill), and Brays Pit and Mathon Pit to the west of the hills. **(G02, G03, G04, DP1)**

Climate change

Climate change may have profound effects on geodiversity in the AONB. It may lead to the permanent loss of geological features or exposures that are subject to active geomorphological processes, such as frost action, erosion and deposition. Natural hazards such as flooding, landslips and rock falls may become more frequent. **(G05)**

There are 47 Local Geological Sites (LGS) within the AONB.



Pillow lava at Clutter's Cave

Guiding principles

- GP1** Ensure that land management, and agricultural and development control practices protect the AONB's geodiversity and provide new geological features where appropriate.
- GP2** Demonstrate best practice in geodiversity management within and adjacent to designated sites.

Strategic objectives

- G01** Conserve the geodiversity resource in line with emerging Geodiversity Action Plans (GAPs).
- G02** Promote greater understanding of the geological value of the AONB and the need for its protection and management.
- G03** Undertake survey, research and monitoring to secure complete information on the state of the AONB's geodiversity resource, including recording temporary exposures before reburial.
- G04** Develop and implement local Geodiversity Action Plans, with the first phase of action plans to be implemented by April 2011.
- G05** Monitor climate change and its effects on the geodiversity resource of the AONB.



Abseiling at Tank Quarry



Fossil hunting at Whitman's Hill Quarry

Historic environment

Background

The historic environment of the Malvern Hills AONB includes a large number and variety of heritage assets. These range from the iconic hill forts on the high ridge and the designed landscapes of the surrounding country houses, to the field patterns of the landscape and the listed buildings and cultural features of the area's settlements. These heritage assets are a vital element of the AONB's character and an important recreational and educational resource.

Some key heritage assets are afforded statutory protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas. These assets are largely well conserved and enhanced through the efforts of their owners, local authorities and government agencies. Other prominent features receive no statutory protection.

Information about designated and non-designated historic assets and landscapes are kept on Historic Environment Records (HERs) which are maintained by Herefordshire Council, Worcestershire County Council and Gloucestershire County Council.

The way in which our heritage assets are protected is changing. During the period covered by this management plan, the Heritage Protection Act is likely to establish a new framework for this protection. Improvements will include drawing together all current designation types into one register, statutory status for the HERs and greater responsibility for local authorities to monitor and administer applications affecting designated assets.

Studies by English Heritage and the archaeological services of the three counties have significantly improved our understanding of the historic environment of the AONB over recent years. The English Heritage publication 'The Malvern Hills, An Ancient Landscape' has summarised this understanding for the general public. The publication highlights areas for further research and this, combined with new discoveries, will continue to add to our understanding.

Studies by English Heritage and the archaeological services of the three counties have significantly improved our understanding of the historic environment of the AONB over recent years.



St Wulstan's Church



Elgar's grave

Many aspects of the historic environment are protected by law ...

Special features

- Iron Age hill forts at British Camp and Midsummer Hill.
- The Shire Ditch – a ridge-top boundary interpreted as having prehistoric origins.
- Bronze Age burial grounds, for example at Colwall and Mathon.
- Moated sites representing medieval settlements.
- Industrial architecture such as limekilns, tunnels and quarry cottages.
- Listed buildings, including Eastnor Castle, Bromesberrow Place and Little Malvern Priory, as well as listed graves and gas lamps.
- Conservation areas – including Malvern Wells, Eastnor, Colwall and part of Cradley.
- Victorian villas of Malvern (Malvern stone and render).
- Half-timbered buildings.
- Designed parks and landscape gardens of national historic interest, including their trees and woodlands, such as Eastnor Castle and Hope End.
- Gardens and parks of local significance, such as Old Colwall and Bromesberrow.
- The unenclosed landscape and designed elements of the Malvern Hills ridge.
- Victorian tree plantings, for example lime boulevards in Colwall, and veteran trees.
- Springs and wells.
- Artistic associations with poets (Elizabeth Barrett Browning), architects (Voysey) and composers (Elgar).
- Eight Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

Key issues

Protection and conservation of key features

Many aspects of the historic environment are protected by law through listing, inclusion in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments, and through conservation area designation. Other prominent features receive no statutory protection, but are afforded additional protection through the planning process and other regulatory systems (for example, Hedgerow Regulations).

However, while this protection can help to prevent deliberate damage, additional measures may be needed to protect features from neglect and to bring them into good condition. There are many features in the AONB, such as buildings, milestones, road signs and traditional settlement patterns, which are important locally and are susceptible to development pressures, but which currently receive no special protection. **(HP1, HO1, HO3, HO4)**

Lack of data

Reliable and robust data on the historic environment is essential so that sites can be managed and historic features protected. Detailed information now exists on the condition of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and listed buildings in the AONB. For example, 92% of listed buildings surveyed in 2008 were in good or fair condition⁴. A methodology is being developed for assessing the condition of Registered Parks and Gardens and a preliminary list of locally important features in the area has also been assembled. However, much research still needs to be done to improve the data and assist understanding of the historic environment and its condition within the AONB. This includes identifying undesignated nationally, regionally and locally important heritage assets and assessing their condition. Work also needs to be undertaken to continue the improvements already taking place to the county Historic Environment Records. **(H02)**

Vernacular and local distinctiveness

There is no single building style, type of material or pattern of development that can be said to characterise the built heritage of the whole AONB. However, within different parts of the AONB there are recognizable features, patterns or 'identities' that make an important contribution to a sense of local distinctiveness. Insensitive development can erode these characteristic elements. There is currently a concern about development within large gardens (classed as 'brownfield sites') that can impact negatively on some town and villagescapes. **(HP1, H01, H02, DP3)**

Poor awareness of the historic environment

There is poor awareness about the historic environment among the public and some land and property owners. This lack of understanding extends not only to the existence of historic features and their place in the wider landscape but also to the impacts of change and development, and the consequences of neglect. Raising public awareness, particularly by encouraging a stronger 'pride of place' for the historic environment and an appreciation of its economic value, will greatly aid its conservation and establish it more firmly as an essential asset. **(H03)**



Hayslad Spout

Impact of rural land use and recreation

Farming and forestry practices can have an impact on the historic environment. This is largely because many of the historic elements and features of the landscape that give it character are not statutorily protected. The cultivation of grassland, deep cultivation for root crops, erection of polytunnels, removal of hedgerows and the establishment of energy crops can all have adverse impacts on the historic environment. Such impacts may be exacerbated by farm diversification and fragmentation. Greater knowledge of the historic environment and how rural land use can influence its conservation is necessary. **(HP1, H03, H04)**

There is evidence that recreational pressure from walkers and from mountain and trail bikes can be detrimental to monuments and other heritage assets. A survey of the Shire Ditch in 2006, for example, found that this Scheduled Ancient Monument was suffering erosion as a result of informal recreational use. **(H01, H03)**

⁴ 'Malvern Hills AONB' Listed Buildings at Risk Survey', Internal research (2008).



Postbox,
West Malvern

Street lighting furniture

Street lighting in sensitive areas can have considerable impacts and can detract from the inherent value of historic streetscapes. In conservation areas street lighting can be controlled through development control, but in other areas it can be difficult to maintain appropriate character in lighting design.

(HP1, H01, DP4)

Climate change

It is predicted that one of the effects of climate change will be an increase in stormy weather. This may cause increased erosion of key sites and features. **(H02)**

Guiding principles

HP1 The development control system and appropriate land management practices should be used to protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment of the AONB.

Strategic objectives

H01 Preserve, conserve and enhance Scheduled Ancient Monuments, listed buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, and features of local architectural or historic interest and their settings, where these contribute to the character of the AONB. Ninety per cent of all Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Registered Parks and Gardens should be in good or improving condition by 2014.

H02 Undertake surveys and research to secure and document information on the historic environment, which will guide future priorities and management. Support the establishment of a list of locally important features.

H03 Promote greater public understanding of, and engagement with, the historic environment of the AONB.

H04 Prepare appropriate management documents for sites and features to guide future management. For example, prepare Conservation Management Plans for at least two monuments such as Midsummer Hill and British Camp by 2014.



British Camp and reservoir

Farming and forestry

Background

Despite significant changes in agricultural practice, and the relative decline over time in the importance of this economic sector to the general economy, farming and forestry continue to provide jobs and income and represent the significant forms of land use in the AONB. The principal agents in managing farmland and woodland are landowners, farmers and tenants, often with the assistance of Natural England, Defra and the Forestry Commission.

In recent years major changes in agricultural support have changed the framework within which farming operates. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) now provides a Single Payment Scheme for farmers, greatly simplifying the CAP mechanism. The Rural Development Programme for England provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England who deliver effective environmental management on their land.

Around 20% of the total AONB area is covered in woodland. This resource consists mainly of small broadleaved woodlands on banks, ridges and hilltops, and hedgerows. Larger woodlands, covering more than 100 ha, are found at Eastnor, Storridge/Alfrick and Bromesberrow.

Forestry policy for the area is provided by the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework, 'Growing our Future'. The framework identifies what is special about forestry and woodlands in the West Midlands. It provides guidance on how to bring sustainable social, environmental and economic benefit to the area through managing its woodland assets. The framework's aims include encouraging economically viable woodland, improving understanding of forestry, and demonstrating how it can help maximize benefits to health, recreation, recycling and biodiversity conservation. These aims are wholly in line with those of this management plan. The framework is supplemented by the 'Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests' and the 'Keepers of Time' ancient and native woodland policy.

In recent years major changes in agricultural support have changed the framework within which farming operates.

Key facts

- **Agriculture is the dominant land use within the AONB, occupying around 80% of the area.**
- **Permanent grassland accounts for 54% of the AONB by area, arable for 23% and woodland covers 8% of the utilised agricultural area.**
- **55% of all farms in the AONB are devoted wholly to livestock, 15% are horticultural, and cereals and general cropping together account for 10% of all holdings.**
- **48.5% of farms are smaller than 5 ha in size, only 5.31% are over 100 ha.**
- **88% of all livestock in the AONB are sheep with cattle accounting for approximately 11%.**

From 'An Evidence base for the Malvern Hills AONB', Centre for Rural Research (2007).



Apples at Suckley orchard



Suckley orchard

Around 20% of the total AONB area is covered in woodland.

Special features

- Ancient semi-natural woodlands, often small-scale and found on banks, ridges and hill tops.
- Unimproved and semi-improved grasslands and commons, providing valuable grazing land and important wildlife habitats.
- Apple, pear and cherry orchards.
- Hedges and hedgerow trees, forming boundaries to old pastures and arable land.
- Large wooded estates and parklands with a mosaic of grassland, woodland and cultivated land.
- Veteran trees in hedgerows, woodlands and fields.

Key issues

Globalisation

Growth in global demand for food together with an increase in land given over to biofuel production has recently driven up commodity prices worldwide. It is possible that there will be growing pressure and more incentives to intensify food production in the UK, with a potential loss of 'conservation land'. However, such activity may be tempered by the rising costs of inputs such as fertilisers and diesel. The removal of the European requirement to 'set-aside' arable land could be seen as a loss to conservation. In the Malvern Hills AONB, the loss of pasture land to arable production is one potential consequence of rising commodity prices. The intensification of production may have a negative impact on the landscape, the historic environment and biodiversity in a number of ways. **(FP1, F01)**

Farm and forest incomes

Recent increases in the global price of raw materials such as wheat and timber can be seen as bucking a trend of general decline in the economic viability of many forms of farming and forestry. Declining incomes and increased competition from imported products have had significant impacts on the rural economy and the availability of jobs in the agricultural sector. While the price of milk and meat is increasing, livestock farming is struggling in the face of rapidly increasing fuel prices and the higher cost of animal feed stuffs, coupled with higher standards of animal welfare. Collectively these could threaten the future of this key land use.

(FP1, F01, F05)



Hay cutting at Longley Green

Sustainable woodland management

Many woodlands in the area are small and fragmented. They have not been actively managed for many years, and their conservation and social value has fallen as a result of a decline in their economic value. Markets for hardwoods are in decline or have failed. However, the demand for renewable energy and for new housing provides an opportunity to use more wood as part of the low carbon economy and to mitigate climate change. Some woodlands also provide valuable cover for game birds and so are important economically. **(FP1, F02, F03, F05)**



Logs at Suckley Wood

Government grants and licences and sustainable woodland management

Figures from the Forestry Commission (internal correspondence, 2008) show that in the past, significant areas of woodland in the AONB have been managed with support from the old style Woodland Grant Scheme. There is an early indication that some woodland owners may not be looking to enter land into the new England Woodland Grant Scheme when the old schemes expire. It is also possible that some grant schemes may be less attractive to smaller woodland owners. This situation will need to be monitored. Support may need to be provided to owners to help them access grant, where this would clearly benefit sustainable woodland management. **(FP1, F01, F02, F03)**

Farm diversification

Farmers have adapted to difficult times by diversifying their businesses – growing new crops and moving into other activities such as tourism accommodation and recreation. Such diversification is in many cases essential to maintain a viable farm economy and can lead to enhanced products and services for the community and visitors. **(FP1, F01)**

While it can be valuable to the rural economy, diversification also has the potential to change the AONB's landscape character, biodiversity and historic environment. For example, diversification of land for equestrian activities can alter the nature of field boundaries and margins, leading to a decline in hedgerows and changes in field sizes. Conversion of barns and adjacent habitats into habitable dwellings potentially reduces nesting and dwelling places for barn owls and bats. **(FP1, F01)**

Farmers have adapted to difficult times by diversifying their businesses.



Fresh produce at the Malvern farmers' market

'Local' food and markets

The production of locally distinctive food and forestry products can play a valuable role in helping to conserve and enhance the unique landscape and biodiversity of the AONB. The success of such practices may depend on a range of factors including the development of support infrastructure, supply chains and co-operative working practices. High-quality marketing and the development of profitable markets can also be crucial. Consumption of local products may reduce carbon footprints while also helping to improve awareness and support for local land management. **(F01, F02, F05)**

Threats to trees and woodland

Tree cover in the AONB has already been depleted by Dutch Elm disease. Current imported diseases of trees such as Alder and Horse Chestnut Phytophthoras also have the potential to dramatically affect the landscape character of the AONB. Animals such as deer and squirrels can also cause damage, particularly to young trees. **(F04)**

Consumption of local products may reduce carbon footprints while also helping to improve awareness and support for local land management.

Cider and perry orchards

A rise in the demand for local produce such as soft fruit, dessert fruit and cider appears to be fuelling an increase in the number of orchards being planted in the area. This is to be welcomed. However, the management regimes of some commercial operations, which may include over-pruning and high use of pesticides, can yield very little conservation benefit. At the same time, a lack of management in some traditional orchards can hasten the demise of these very valuable wildlife habitats. **(F01, F02, F05)**

Impact of existing coniferous trees within ancient semi-natural woodland sites

Previous plantings of conifers within ancient semi-natural woodlands have had a significant and detrimental effect on landscape character and species biodiversity in the AONB. Conifers are no longer being planted in significant numbers and many conifer trees are now being removed from plantations as felling operations take place. **(F03)**

Loss of skills in agricultural and woodland management practices

Traditional skills such as coppicing, hedge laying and orchard management have been in significant decline in recent years, although there are signs of a more recent renaissance in these skills. A variety of organisations run courses in sustainable woodland management, hedgelaying, coppicing and orchard management. These courses are helping to revive traditions that still have a valuable role to play in countryside management. Conservation days and voluntary activity also help to keep these skills alive. In some areas the average age of land managers is increasing and a shortage of new land managers, together with a shortage of contractors, may also threaten the continuation of established land management practices. **(FP1, F01, C03)**

Sustainable soil and water management

Healthy soil and water resources are of critical importance in sustaining profitable agriculture as well as the wildlife and landscapes of the AONB. Initiatives such as Catchment Sensitive Farming (to control diffuse water pollution) and the principles of sustainable soil management should be followed in order to retain and improve the quantity and quality of these resources.

(FP2)

Climate change

Winters without bitter weather allow microbes to survive in greater numbers. These can then infect livestock and plants in the following year. Climate change also has the potential to dramatically change growing conditions for trees and may result in the decline of certain species from the landscape and an increase in others. Crop types are likely to change and there could be more demand for water for agriculture. Wetter summers could affect harvests.

(F01, F04)

Healthy soil and water resources are of critical importance in sustaining profitable agriculture.

Guiding principles

FP1 Support a viable farming and forestry economy that provides an economic return while maintaining and enhancing the landscape character, historic environment and biodiversity of the AONB.

FP2 Manage water and soil resources in accordance with quality standards, government approved initiatives and best practice guidelines.

Strategic objectives

F01 Promote the maximum take up of agri-environment and woodland grant support schemes (guided by the Regional Forestry Framework) with 80% of eligible land in the AONB being covered by such schemes by 2014.

F02 Bring woodlands, orchards and other characteristic habitats into favourable conservation condition through management regimes that provide an economic return; for example, through the production of timber, wood fuel and other sustainable uses.

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

F04 Support appropriate measures which monitor and control invasive non-native plant and animal species that damage biodiversity resources.

F05 Increase the production and consumption of local food and land-based products; for example, by improving supply chains and stimulating local demand.

Hedge plants at Wellington Heath



3 Sustainable communities

Introduction

The character of the Malvern Hills AONB is as much about the communities who live there as it is the physical form of its landscape. Interaction between people and the land over thousands of years has made the AONB what it is today.

Conserving and enhancing the AONB therefore involves not only the physical management of the land but also meeting the social and economic needs of its people.

Many people within the communities derive their livelihoods either from within the AONB, or by commuting to centres of employment. There are also many retired people living in the AONB who are attracted by its rural setting and who depend on local services. High house prices are a clear indicator that people want to live here, attracted by the beautiful landscapes, tranquil villages and the gentle rural ambience of the area.

The area's economy has a broad base. Agriculture supports farming communities, although some farmers are diversifying into tourism and recreation related activities to maintain their incomes. There are also businesses and high-tech industries nearby that employ people within the communities and attract others to live there. Tourism is an increasingly important contributor to the economy, with the landscape and the picturesque towns and villages being key attractions.

This next group of themes – community, built development, tourism and transport – addresses the human element of the AONB, including people's social and economic needs and their capacity to enjoy the area. These issues are again strongly inter-related with changes in one area often impacting on others, and on the environment. For example, a dynamic social and economic climate is essential for maintaining livelihoods. However, it can also lead to pressures for development, higher traffic loads and greater visitor impact on a landscape that can be sensitive to change.

Local communities need local services, yet there is a trend of village shops closing and reduced public transport services. These changes can increase deprivation in communities and also impact on the environment, forcing people to use cars to access essential services. The challenge for the management of the AONB is to find solutions that enhance the social and economic well-being of communities while protecting the inherent value and importance of the environment.

Farmers' market in Malvern



The character of the Malvern Hills AONB is as much about the communities who live there as it is the physical form of its landscape.

A vision for 2030

Community

- The AONB offers a range of cultural services to the communities that use it, providing a sense of place, spiritual refreshment and a focus for health and well-being.
- A vibrant, harmonious and diverse local community engages in local decision-making and understands how it can benefit from, and contribute to, the AONB.
- People enjoy a high quality of living with well-used and excellent local facilities sustained by residents and visitors.
- There is good access to jobs and housing.
- The community understands the need to conserve the AONB's unique features and is actively involved in doing so.
- The impacts of climate change and ways to adapt to it are understood, and the community has a low carbon footprint.

Built development

- Planning and development meets the needs of local people and respects the character and distinctiveness of the landscape.
- Communities take a full and active part in the planning process.
- New development is sustainable and to a high standard of design, using local materials wherever possible.
- Agricultural development supports the local economy and respects the special character of the area.

Tourism

- The AONB is an exemplar of sustainable tourism, enjoyment and recreation, based on its rich natural and cultural heritage.
- The visitor experience is of a high quality and is open to all in society.
- Visitors' enjoyment and sustainable use of the AONB is well informed and respectful of local residents and land management practices.
- Local shops, pubs and farm gates serve a bounty of local produce, and tourism makes an increased economic contribution to the local economy.
- Tourism and visitor use respects and benefits natural assets, actively contributing to the positive state of the AONB and the natural environment.

Transport

- An effective public and community transport system serves the needs of the local community, visitors and the economy.
- A network of tranquil lanes and accessible green space provides opportunities for walkers, cyclists and others to enjoy the area without using cars.
- Cycle lanes and footpaths link settlements with schools, places of work and the wider countryside, encouraging environmentally friendly transport and a healthy lifestyle.

A dynamic social and economic climate is essential for maintaining livelihoods.

The area's natural beauty also contributes to people's desire to live and work here.

Community – living and working

Background

It is estimated that the AONB is home to more than 12,000 people, dispersed in the villages, isolated farms and houses, and in communities on the edges of Ledbury and around the Malvern Hills. Their presence in the area, and the activities of generations before them, have contributed significantly to the landscape's natural beauty.

The area's natural beauty also contributes to people's desire to live and work here. This high-quality environment no doubt helps to explain why a high proportion of retired people live in and around the AONB and why a relatively high number of people are also employed in business and professional work here. This in turn has helped to establish a tradition of high-technology industry around the AONB. The landscape has also had a major influence on the tourism and recreation economies.

In recent years, local authorities throughout the country have helped to establish non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships called Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). These Partnerships have been responsible for producing Sustainable Community Strategies. The strategies aim to meet people's needs, improve the quality of life and achieve vibrant and sustainable communities in the future. Strategies now exist in draft or final form throughout the AONB.

Four parishes within the AONB have also produced Parish Plans. These plans identify key issues and actions relating to well-being, development and the environment. These and other community-led plans help considerably to focus the minds of the community on issues that are important to them. They can also be used to inform Sustainable Community Strategies as well as district, county and unitary council policies that could be included in development and other relevant plans.

Key facts

- **Around 12,200 people are resident in the AONB, living in just over 5,000 households.**
- **AONB residents are more likely to own their own homes and to have access to a car than the England average.**
- **Income levels for people in the three AONB local authority areas (Herefordshire, Malvern Hills District and Forest of Dean District) are generally higher than the average for the West Midlands and South West regions, but similar to levels for England and Wales.**
- **Levels of deprivation for the same three local authority areas are correspondingly low.**
- **1.93% of the AONB population is unemployed (the average for England is 3.35%).**
- **18.13% of the AONB population is retired (the average for England is 13.35%).**
- **The economy is more dependent on agriculture, real estate, business activity and education than it is on manufacturing compared with both the West Midlands region and England as a whole.**

From 'An Evidence base for the Malvern Hills AONB', Centre for Rural Research (2007).

Special features

- A reasonably content and cohesive community identity.
- An attractive environment for low impact industries and a skilled workforce.
- A desirable place in which to live and work.
- A relatively high proportion of home workers (15.55% work mainly from home compared with a West Midlands average of 8.94%).
- A number of highly engaged communities within the AONB who are actively influencing their environment, for example through Village Design Statements and Community Plans.
- A revival of local skills in traditional landscape management such as hedge laying, coppicing and fencing.



Composting wormeries at the Malvern Hills Outdoor Centre



Children participating in a school Eco project

Key issues

Changes in communities

A general decline in shops, services, facilities and public transport provision can be important factors that change the nature of communities. These can all contribute to changes in the demographics of local populations with young people, in particular, leaving rural communities to seek work and affordable living in towns and cities. The number of retired people resident in the AONB is relatively high, and this trend is likely to increase. **(CP1, C01, C03)**

Opportunities for farmers' markets and direct sales of local products from farms are being explored by many farmers.

Affordable housing

Housing affordability is an important issue in rural areas, especially in areas like the AONB that attract a high proportion of professional and retired people. Average house prices in Herefordshire (£192,242) and Worcestershire (£184,969) are higher than those in both the West Midlands (£150,998) and in England and Wales as a whole (£177,099)⁵. As income levels for Herefordshire, Malvern Hills and the Forest of Dean (average £446 per week) are broadly equivalent to the average for England and Wales (£451.60), affordability is a key issue, especially for those on low incomes who want to remain in the area.

It is particularly important that people who work in managing the rural environment and conserving the special features of the AONB are able to find a base in the area. Provision of affordable housing within the AONB to meet identified needs is vital. However, this also requires careful consideration to prevent a negative impact on character. The requirements for affordable housing are being identified in local plans/Local Development Frameworks. **(CP2)**

Carbon footprint

Despite some improving performance, the community performs badly in respect of its impact on the environment. Residents of Malvern Hills District emit more carbon dioxide per dwelling than almost any other part of Britain (it is 6th out of a list of 386 local authority areas). It also has the largest ecological footprint (the land needed to sustain our current lifestyle) in the West Midlands.⁶ **(CP1, CO1, DP8)**

A changing rural economy

Although no specific data is available for the state of the agricultural economy in the AONB, the financial position for farmers nationally is volatile. Farmers continue to seek other forms of income generation including tourism accommodation, diversification of crops and communication development. Opportunities for farmers' markets and direct sales of local products from farms are being explored by many farmers. Care needs to be taken to make sure that the impact of these activities is positive for the AONB's landscape. **(F05)**

Income from tourism continues to rise steadily throughout the West Midlands region, although the impact of the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in 2001 is still evident in some of the figures. Herefordshire, for example, had still not achieved the tourism income it had in 2000 by 2003, the date for the latest figures (£68 million, compared with £89 million in 2000). Tourism is an important contributor to the economy and the landscape of the AONB is a key asset. Income supports many local businesses such as village shops, post offices and pubs. **(TP1, T01)**

There is a strong network of business support in all three counties including Business Link, Advantage West Midlands and South West England Development Agency (SWRDA). In addition a variety of funding programmes exist to help with business start up and development in the AONB. Funding through the England Rural Development Programme can support rural diversification and vocational training in the agricultural sector.



Apple juicing in Colwall

⁵'An Evidence base for the Malvern Hills AONB', Centre for Rural Research (2007), House Prices based on February 2007 figures.

⁶'Sustainable Community Strategy for Malvern Hills District 2006–2021 A Draft for Consultation', Malvern Hills District Council (2006).

There has been a noticeable decline in traditional agricultural and woodland skills such as coppicing, hedge laying and orchard management. These skills, and others such as animal husbandry and shepherding, are vital to conserving and enhancing the AONB's characteristic landscape features. There is scope for financial support for apprenticing in these skills on the grounds of conserving the AONB's special qualities. There is also a need to address the decline in markets for traditional craft products and to ensure a supportive policy environment for skills development. **(CP1, C03)**

Awareness of the AONB

Although there is a high awareness of the Malvern Hills, many people in the community are unaware of the AONB and its special qualities, or their impact on its features. There is also a perception that the designation prevents development and constrains the economy. Involving the community in managing the area can help people to develop a strong sense of place for the AONB and a greater understanding of its significance. This may be, for example, through participating in activities such as conservation projects, community planning, design issues and generally enhancing the well-being of local people. **(C02)**

Litter and fly-tipping

Litter, fly-tipping and dumped cars are rated by local residents as major detractors from the beauty of the landscape. Increasingly stringent waste disposal regulations, combined with charges levied on disposers of waste, mean that illegal rubbish dumping in rural areas can be a significant problem. Casual litter dropping, particularly of food packaging, and dog fouling are also problems at car parks and along public paths. **(C02)**



Litter at Earl Beauchamp Fountain car park

Guiding principles

- CP1** Enable vibrant communities to grow sustainably by stimulating economic prosperity while maintaining the distinctive character of the area.
- CP2** Support the provision of affordable housing which is appropriate to the character of the area and meets local community needs.

Strategic objectives

- C01** Maintain and enhance access to essential services, particularly in areas of need, in sustainable and innovative ways.
- C02** Develop an enhanced sense of ownership and appreciation for the distinctive character of the AONB among local communities and visitors through the provision of information and interpretation, and opportunities for involvement in consultation activities and other forms of engagement.
- C03** Foster opportunities for training and retraining in conservation, agriculture and woodland management and traditional building skills to meet the need to conserve and enhance the AONB's special qualities.

Involving the community in managing the area can help people to develop a strong sense of place for the AONB and a greater understanding of its significance.

Development is inevitable and necessary in the AONB. It helps to maintain economic viability, sustains the area's population and supports those who manage the land.

Built development

Background

Development is inevitable and necessary in the AONB. It helps to maintain economic viability, sustains the area's population and supports those who manage the land. It is vital for the well-being of the AONB and its communities that a framework exists to manage this change effectively and sympathetically. The principal elements of this framework are national Planning Policy Statements, Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks. These are supported by a number of other documents, such as strategies, policy statements and appraisals.

The AONB management plan needs to provide a focus for development in the AONB that is complementary to this framework. However, it should also set out specific statements and objectives that will help to maintain the integrity of the AONB as a clearly defined area.

In general, policies and development control decisions that affect the AONB should favour conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape. In all cases, the environmental effects of new development proposals will be a major consideration, although it will also be appropriate to have regard to the economic and social well-being of the area.

Some aspects of land use activities and land management, such as agriculture and forestry, are beyond the remit of planning policy and the development control process. It is also the aim of the management plan to try to influence such activities to the overall benefit of the AONB.

Special features

- Protection offered to the AONB through planning law and policy at national, regional and local level.
- Rural character and scale of settlements contribute to local distinctiveness, landscape character and sense of tranquillity.
- Views to and from the Malvern Hills.
- High-quality built environment characterised by numerous distinctive features, such as settlement patterns, landmark buildings, garden layouts, boundary elements, the distance of buildings from highways, and planting traditions.
- Interested and active local communities engaged in community planning initiatives in the AONB.



Gas lamp

Key issues

Consistency of guidance for development proposals in the AONB

The AONB extends into two Government Regions and three Local Development Framework areas. There is therefore a need to coordinate policy at an early stage to make sure that it is consistent across the area. Planning policy, provided by the Regional Spatial Strategies and the Local Development Frameworks, offers a range of guidance on location, design and environmental management in relation to development. Key issues that affect the AONB's landscape, such as the presence and siting of polytunnels, require a consistent approach. In line with a consistent policy approach, it is also desirable that development infrastructure needs (for example, those related to green infrastructure and transport) across and beyond the AONB are coherent and identified in advance of development. **(DP1, DP2, D04)**



Village sign at Wellington Heath

Landscape and historic character

Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisations now exist for the whole of the AONB. Such tools have not always been well used in the past, in part because they have not been widely available and well promoted. In dealing with applications for development, it is essential that local planning authorities take into account the landscape and historic character of the area and the identified threats to it. **(DP2, D04)**

Views to and from the Malvern Hills AONB

High levels of visibility from the high ground of the Malvern Hills AONB mean that development can have a significant visual impact in the landscape as well as on people's enjoyment and appreciation of its qualities. Planning policy and decisions on planning applications should take account of the importance of key views (both short and long distance) to and from the AONB. **(D03)**



Suckley Post Office

Local distinctiveness and the built environment

There is no single vernacular style for the built environment of the AONB, although there are a range of styles that give character and distinctiveness to different parts of the area. Lack of attention to elements of this character, such as design, location, density, layout and materials, lack of adequate open space and loss of features, can harm the special qualities of the AONB and diminish the overall distinctiveness of its built environment. The loss of specimen trees, stone walls, hedgerows and other landscape elements that contribute to the character and local distinctiveness in the built landscape should be monitored and controlled. There is currently a lack of comprehensive design guidance for the AONB. **(DP1, DP2, DP3, D01, D02, D04)**



Milestone at Malvern Wells

There is also a concern that small traditional orchards within settlements are at risk from redevelopment.

Cumulative impacts of development

National planning protection for AONBs tends to focus on the potential impacts of major development and on the need to minimise such impacts. In reality, one of the biggest threats to the area comes from the cumulative impact of large numbers of small developments which, individually, may not be regarded as problematic. There is a need to monitor and to consider the overall impacts of such cumulative change and to provide guidance on appropriate design elements. **(D05)**

In-filling

General policy directs much new development towards brownfield sites and land within settlement boundaries. In pursuing this policy, care must be taken that key elements of a particular settlement are not lost. For example, new build within the curtilage of existing properties can compromise the integrity of certain types of settled landscape. There is also a concern that small traditional orchards within settlements are at risk from redevelopment. As key priority habitats locally and under the Biodiversity Action Plan this must be avoided.

(DP1, DP2, DP3, DP5, D04)

Affordable housing

Affordable housing needs are sometimes addressed through exceptions policies in key local planning documents. This potentially allows for development on sites that would not otherwise be available for housing. The provision of affordable housing in rural areas is a recognised need and is supported by this plan. Any new affordable housing, particularly outside settlements identified in the Local Development Frameworks, should be sensitively located and designed (and appropriately conditioned against future change) so it does not damage the special character of the AONB. **(DP1, DP2, DP3, DP5, D02)**

Agricultural buildings and infrastructure

Farm and agricultural buildings are often located in areas of open countryside, where other buildings would not be permitted. Their development and redevelopment can have a particularly high impact on the rural landscape and built environment and on people's enjoyment of it. There is a particular need to make sure that such buildings are appropriately scaled, sited and designed, and that they account for the needs of local wildlife. This also applies to other agricultural developments such as the creation of bodies of water for irrigation. Large water bodies are not a characteristic feature of the AONB. However, it is also recognised that the need for sustainable sources of water for agricultural purposes may grow if summers become hotter and drier. Appropriate scaling, siting and design of such features will be essential if they are to fit well into the landscape and make a valuable overall contribution to the AONB.

(DP1, DP2, DP3, DP4)

A key issue to be addressed by local authorities is the increase in the use of polytunnels and their potential impact on the landscape character of the AONB. A coordinated approach on this issue should be sought between the three local planning authorities. **(DP7)**

Equestrian developments

Each year there are a number of planning applications in the AONB for equestrian developments. These include new barn and stable facilities, all-weather riding arenas (menages) and changes of use of land to equestrian use. Although each individual application may have a fairly limited impact, the cumulative effect can lead to increased erosion of landscape character and an increase in 'sub-urbanisation' of the countryside. This includes, for example, the erection of new buildings, accesses and fences, the sub-division of fields and an increase in field shelters, hay stores and external lighting. Local policies need to be developed to address these impacts. There is also concern about the impacts of equine-related development that is not considered through the development control process. **(DP2, DP3, DP6)**

Sustainable design

The AONB provides an ideal opportunity to demonstrate best practice in sustainable housing design. The Government's Building Research Establishment (BRE) issued guidance in 2006 (the Code for Sustainable Homes), with the aim of improving the overall sustainability of new homes. This new code replaces the previous Ecohomes standard. It sets a national standard for designing and constructing homes to higher environmental standards.

The requirement to achieve certain ratings of sustainability will be phased in over time and this should help to prevent development eroding the quality of the AONB's water, land, air and tranquillity. The guidance includes maximizing energy efficiency, encouraging the use of sustainable drainage systems, and using sustainable and efficient waste water treatment. **(DP3)**

Renewable energy and energy conservation

The development of renewable forms of energy, such as wind and solar, is likely to increase for both domestic and commercial purposes. While playing a key role in tackling climate change such developments can have a negative impact on the special character of the AONB, for example through their scale and through the introduction of extraneous elements in the landscape.

Some forms of renewable energy development will be more acceptable than others. Preference should be given to those forms that make use of, and contribute to, core elements of the AONB landscape, such as wood fuel. Energy conservation rarely impacts on natural beauty and should be encouraged wherever possible as a key way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. **(DP1, DP2, DP8)**

Energy conservation rarely impacts on natural beauty and should be encouraged wherever possible as a key way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Solar panels at The Lighthouse, Mathon



Lack of local stone and materials

Mineral extraction is largely non-existent in the AONB as it is effectively prohibited by mineral plan policies other than in exceptional circumstances. A lack of local building materials can make it difficult to restore characteristic features such as walls and buildings and to meet locally distinctive design standards in new developments. It can also reduce sustainability as more materials have to be brought in from elsewhere.

Systems need to be put in place to encourage recycling and re-use of local materials. The use of spoil and the investigation of sources for small-scale, localised extraction of new stone should be considered. This needs to be addressed through the Minerals and Waste Development Frameworks being developed by Worcestershire and Herefordshire Councils. Locally grown wood from woodlands run on sustainable principles is an important building material. Where appropriate, its use would also help to reduce importing materials from outside the area while supporting local forestry business. **(DP3, D01)**

Light pollution

Inappropriate lighting of existing and new developments within and beyond the AONB can cause a hazing over of the dark skies that contribute so much to the sense of tranquillity in the AONB. It is the combined effect of lighting in villages and towns and the lighting of large developments that are particularly intrusive. Light can also have an adverse impact on bats and other nocturnal animals. **(DP4)**

Guiding principles

- DP1** The distinctive character and natural beauty of the AONB will be fully reflected in the development and implementation of consistent statutory land use planning policy and guidance across the AONB, and in decision-making on planning applications for development.
- DP2** Development control should be guided by emerging characterisation studies including Landscape Character Assessments, Historic Landscape Characterisation and vernacular design studies, together with relevant capacities studies.
- DP3** Development within the AONB (including landscaping schemes) should be subject to high standards of design and sustainability that reflect local character. New development should incorporate high ratings for environmental standards as soon as possible under the Code for Sustainable Homes and other relevant guidance. Energy conservation should be supported wherever possible.
- DP4** Lighting schemes in the AONB's rural areas should be kept to a minimum. In accordance with best practice, they should be designed to be low level and to minimise light spillage.
- DP5** There should be a presumption against the loss of traditional orchards through their use for infilling developments within settlements or changes to other uses.
- DP6** Equestrian development should proceed in accordance with best practice guidelines, including a recognition that cumulative small-scale developments can have negative impacts on local landscape character.

- DP7** Few locations within the AONB are able to accommodate significant polytunnel developments or are appropriate for such development. Any proposed polytunnel development in or affecting the AONB should be scrutinised very closely. Where an essential need can be demonstrated (for large developments) and no other suitable location is available outside the AONB a whole farm approach should be taken to ensure an acceptable location, design, and scale, and to keep landscape impacts to a minimum.
- DP8** Large-scale turbines or wind farms within the AONB are unacceptable. However, the development of smaller scale renewable energy schemes should be encouraged where these make use of core elements of the AONB landscape such as its woodland and/or where they do not negatively impact on the distinctive attributes or special qualities of the AONB.
- DP9** In exercising development control decisions, opportunities should be sought to positively enhance the special features and character of the AONB.

Strategic objectives

- DO1** Encourage the recycling, re-use and investigation of extraction of small quantities of locally distinctive building materials, such as Malvern stone, where this is needed to help retain local distinctiveness in the built environment.
- DO2** Support the production of community-led plans, strategies and statements (such as Conservation Area Appraisals and Parish Plans) that seek to guide appropriate development and conserve local distinctiveness.
- DO3** Identify important and strategic views to and from the Malvern Hills, and ensure that these are recognised as material considerations in relation to planning decisions.
- DO4** Develop a programme of guidance on key planning and design issues appropriate to the AONB, aimed at planning authorities, developers and other interested parties, that takes account of the special distinctiveness of the area.
- DO5** Monitor the cumulative impact of small-scale development within the AONB and use data to inform the development or revision of relevant policy.

West Malvern



Tourism, recreation and access

Background

The Malvern Hills AONB has attracted visitors in pursuit of quiet recreation for many centuries. Local springs in the Malvern Hills were promoted in the Victorian era for their purity and healing properties. This transformed Malvern and its surrounds into a fashionable spa resort. Each year, some 1.25 million visitors come to the AONB to walk, cycle, horse ride, to undertake other recreational pursuits, and to appreciate its natural and built environments⁷.

The area is also an invaluable resource for residents who wish to undertake some of the many leisure activities on offer. Tourism and recreation make a significant contribution to the local economy. The attractive environment of the AONB is also an important resource to help people keep fit and healthy.

The nature and intensity of recreation and tourism varies across the AONB. The greatest range and pressure of recreational use is largely restricted to the 12 square kilometres of the northern and central Malvern Hills, reflecting the dramatic beauty and accessibility of this area. The most pronounced impacts of tourism, recreation and access are concentrated within this small area of what is a small AONB. The promotion of tourism and recreation activities, continued expansion of access to the AONB, and diversification of farming and forestry for recreational purposes will continue to provide economic, social and some environmental benefits for the AONB.

Both Herefordshire and Worcestershire councils support tourism strategies which include their parts of the Malvern Hills AONB. The South West Tourism Strategy 'Towards 2015 – Shaping Tomorrow's Tourism' includes the part of the AONB that falls within Gloucestershire. All of these strategies recognise the importance of AONBs as special landscapes and as important destinations for people seeking the natural environment. The strategies also recognise the need to preserve these assets, to enhance the quality of the environment and to support visitor management and regulation initiatives that help to deliver sustainability in the tourism sector.

⁷ Malvern Hills AONB Visitor Survey 1999-2000; Heart of England Tourist Board (2000).

Cycling near the Wyche Cutting



Herefordshire Council, and Worcestershire and Gloucestershire County Councils, all produce Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs) for their rights of way networks. ROWIPs assess the adequacy of the network to meet current and future demands for walking, cycling and riding. They also provide aims and objectives for managing the network in the future.

Initiatives have been launched by government and many other organisations to encourage healthy lifestyles and an increase in physical activity including walking and cycling. The government's Obesity Strategy for England ('Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives'), for example, includes a 'Walking into Health' campaign that aims to get a third of England walking at least 1,000 more steps daily by 2012.

Special features

- Unspoiled 'natural' environment.
- Dramatic scenery and spectacular views.
- Quiet rural lanes for walking, cycling and horse riding.
- Visitor attractions such as The Malvern Showground and historic buildings and parks such as Eastnor Castle.
- Open access on foot, unfettered by stiles and gates, across a large part of the Malvern Hills and Commons.
- The proximity to centres of population, principally Malvern.
- Villages and market towns such as Ledbury (partly within the AONB boundary).
- Established trails and routes, such as the Elgar Route, the Cider Trail, Literary Guide and Discovery Walks.
- Opportunities to engage in a wide range of recreational activities, including angling, equestrian activities, hang gliding, kite flying, model gliding, sledging, cycling, abseiling and walking.
- A range of cultural features and attractions including art, theatre, music, literature and gastronomy.
- Opportunities to participate in well managed and appropriately scaled field sports.

Key issues

Awareness of access rights

There is a well-developed rights of way network in the AONB that includes both public footpaths and bridleways. On the Malvern Hills this network is overlaid by a system of open access for pedestrians and horse riders on land under the jurisdiction of the Malvern Hills Conservators. These arrangements can lead to confusion over access rights in the transition zone between statutory rights of way and open access land. Greater clarity on the arrangements and location of access opportunities is needed for recreational users.

(TP2, T02, T04)

Mountain biking

Mountain biking is popular on the Malvern Hills but there are no dedicated facilities, such as designated routes, for use by mountain bikes. There are reports of recreational conflict between mountain bikers and other users of the hills although the number of reported accidents is very small. Open access rights on Malvern Hills Conservators' land do not extend to cyclists and some use paths and tracks that they have no legal right to be on. This problem may be compounded by a policy of minimal signage on the open access land. However, the solution is not to increase signage to the detriment of the landscape. There is a shortage of hard data about recreational conflict and damage to the landscape. **(TP2, T02, T04)**

Better information on levels of use and impacts will be essential to help manage this change and to maintain the special features of the area.

Traffic volume on quiet roads

Many of the AONB's small rural roads are used for walking, cycling and horse riding. These are some of the most tranquil parts of the AONB. Increasing volumes of traffic on these rural roads would compromise the tranquillity of the network and discourage their use for quiet recreational enjoyment. It is recognised, though, that many businesses, including farms, in rural areas rely on HGV and car transport. **(TP3, T01, T03, TR01, TR02, TRP1)**

Visitor impact

The England Leisure Visits Study (2005) identified walking as the most popular activity on leisure visits away from home (ranking equal first place with eating and drinking out). Eighteen per cent of the survey population said this was the main reason for their trip (up from 12% in 2002-03).

The Phase Two Preferred Option of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy points to an increasing resident population in the region. It proposes 365,000 new dwellings to help meet this expansion before 2026. A significant amount of new housing development will take place in south Worcestershire. Major government drivers to improve the nation's health could also lead to a higher level of outdoor activity. As one of the iconic landscapes of the West Midlands, and due to its assured open access, it is likely that there will be a higher level of demand for recreational activity on the Malvern Hills and in other parts of the AONB in the years to come. Better information on levels of use and impacts will be essential to help manage this change and to maintain the special features of the area.

It will also be necessary to think flexibly about creating and promoting greater opportunities for sustainable countryside access. This would include providing and managing green space and access close to where people live and work. This may help to alleviate pressure on the hills themselves. Private landowners also play a valuable role in reducing pressure on 'honeypot' sites by providing a welcoming experience to visitors on the many rights of way and permissive paths in the area. **(TP1, TP2, TP3, T01, T02, T03)**

Car parking around the northern and central Malvern Hills provides easy access to the ridge and other walks. However, opportunities to park elsewhere in the AONB are sometimes limited. This is particularly the case in villages where visitors may be more likely to contribute to the local economy. There is scope for more active management of visitors to reduce the impact of visitor pressure on the ridge and 'spread the load' to other paths and areas within the AONB, while safeguarding key areas of tranquillity. **(TP3, T03)**

Visitor spend

Figures on visitor numbers demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of tourists visiting Herefordshire and Worcestershire are day trippers (86.5% in 2004).⁸ Day visitors contribute far less income to the local economy than those who stay overnight. Generating greater overnight stays is a key aim of tourism strategies for the area. **(TP1, TP2, T01, T02, T04, T05)**

⁸An Evidence Base for the Malvern Hills AONB; Centre for Rural Research (2007).

The Big Chill, Eastnor



Signage

Good waymarking and signage of the rights of way network can serve many valuable purposes. For example, it prevents people from getting lost and ensures that they do not inadvertently stray and interfere with land management practices. However, in some areas, such as the open hills and commons, a proliferation of signs could also detract from people's enjoyment of the open countryside. The use of different types of sign and signs made from different materials can also contribute to a sense of disharmony in the landscape. **(TP2, T04, T05)**

Standards of path repair

In some parts of the AONB a footpath or track may be one of the most obvious signs of human activity in an otherwise 'natural' setting. Overly formalised and heavily engineered paths can jar in such locations. By contrast, paths and path repairs that have been sympathetically designed and implemented can be a positive feature of the landscape and can contribute to the enjoyment of a recreational experience. In general, the more 'natural' settings require a more sensitive approach to path and track management. **(TP2)**

Interpretation and awareness

Organisations including the Malvern Hills Conservators and local authorities have produced materials such as leaflets and on-site panels for some parts of the AONB. Internet-based interpretation also covers a number of areas within the AONB. However, there is little interpretation for other features of the AONB. Interpretation is important for raising awareness of the AONB's resources, for both residents and visitors, and for enhancing understanding of the need for their conservation. **(T05)**

Links between the rural economy and the tourism and recreation industry

Links between farming and forestry management and the tourism and recreation industry in the AONB are sometimes poorly developed. Although a small range of locally distinctive and locally sourced produce is available, this is not extensive and could be greatly enhanced. Strengthening this link would contribute to establishing a new focus for land management – to produce food and crafts that are specific to the area while conserving and enhancing features of landscape character, biodiversity and the historic environment. **(TP1, F05)**

Information about local products and their availability is sparse. So too is information about local services, businesses and resources that can be used by the community and visitors. **(T05)**

Poor accessibility

For some sectors of society, particularly those who are less mobile, access to the countryside, tourism and recreation facilities, shops and other services in the AONB is poor. Little information is available about access opportunities for people who are less mobile. In some parts of the AONB stiles have been replaced by gates and easy access trails have been established. This allows greater access for people with a wide range of physical abilities. However, more still needs to be done to make access easier. In some cases cultural barriers and perceptions may act as a deterrent to enjoyment of the countryside. The Outdoors for All Diversity Action Plan provides a basis for addressing many access issues. **(T02)**



Horse riding near Mathon Court

For some sectors of society, particularly those who are less mobile, access to the countryside, tourism and recreation facilities, shops and other services in the AONB is poor.

Guiding principles

- TP1** The development and management of tourism and recreation in the AONB should take place within an overriding framework of sustainability. It should be based on good evidence, respecting the character of the area and the needs of visitors for quiet informal recreation.
- TP2** Management of the access network and its associated infrastructure should not detract unnecessarily from the special qualities of the landscape.
- TP3** New car parking provision for the general public is unlikely to be acceptable around the southern Malvern Hills. Any promotion or publicity for this area should be directed at local and sustainable use.

Strategic objectives

- T01** Encourage and stimulate sustainable tourism and recreational use of the AONB, providing a quality visitor experience that helps to protect the local environment, contributes to the health of the community and supports the economy of the area.
- T02** Provide enhanced sustainable access and accessibility to recreation and tourist facilities and the public rights of way network.
- T03** Pursue appropriate opportunities to spread recreational use to those areas which can sustain it and which will benefit from it.
- T04** Promote a simpler and clearer message to recreational users about access rights and responsibilities on the open hills and commons.
- T05** Encourage greater awareness and understanding of the AONB, the impacts of recreational use on its special features and the need for appropriate behaviour and sustainable management.



Walkers and paragliders at Pinnacle Hill

Transport

Background

The Malvern Hills AONB is easily accessed by major roads. These include the M5 and M50 motorways, which bring the populations of the South West and West Midlands close to the AONB. Several main roads cut through or skirt the Malvern Hills. There is a significant network of rural lanes which are sometimes heavily used by visitor traffic. Several car parks and informal verge parking contribute to the easy access of the AONB, particularly around the northern and central Malvern Hills.

Regular train services are offered on the Hereford–London and Hereford–Birmingham rail lines, which pass through the AONB. Weekday services are frequent, and bus services connect to the train stations, although links between transport modes are not necessarily seamless. A ‘Hills Hopper’ bus service operates from March to September on weekends and Bank Holiday Mondays, providing bus access to many parts of the AONB for residents and visitors. The bus is equipped for carrying bicycles. Other frequent bus services connect the larger communities of the AONB and beyond.

Most walking, cycling and horse riding trips are made for recreation purposes, and a number of pedestrian routes connect residential areas with places for recreation.

Most freight traffic in the AONB is linked to the Malvern Water bottling plant at Colwall. Although no opportunities to transfer freight from roads to rail are likely to arise in the near future, any that do arise will be supported subject to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and its special qualities.

An aim to reduce the impact of traffic in the AONB would largely be achieved through the policies and programme of actions contained within the Local Transport Plans for the three counties. These plans have brought a greater strategic emphasis to transport management aimed at enhancing access to key services, integrating transport provision and infrastructure improvements, and promoting sustainable forms of transport.

Special features

- Good regional rail access and regular services to and from the West Midlands and the South East.
- Easy access and car park provision to the high hills and ridges of the northern and central Malvern Hills.
- A comprehensive network of rights of way.
- Rural character of minor roads defined by locally distinctive features such as hedgerows, cast iron road signs and milestones.
- Quiet rural lanes providing good opportunities for cycling and horse riding.
- Good potential for integrated public transport provision between trains and buses.

An aim to reduce the impact of traffic in the AONB would largely be achieved through the policies and programme of actions contained within the Local Transport Plans for the three counties.

In order to retain tranquillity... it will be essential that the small volumes of traffic currently associated with much of the rural road network do not increase significantly.

Key issues

Impact of car traffic

At peak times the AONB can experience high levels of car traffic and a high demand for parking. This can be particularly acute around the hills at weekends and bank holidays, and around The Malvern Showground when popular events are taking place. During these times car traffic can lead to elevated noise levels, public safety concerns, disturbance to wildlife, local communities and other road users, visual intrusion and verge damage (from informal parking). These impacts are largely unquantified yet are likely to be considerable. The level of use of the private car by local people (as opposed to visitors) to access the hills and nearby countryside is also unknown. **(TRP1, TR01, TR04)**

Tranquillity monitoring carried out by CPRE in 2006 shows clearly that the least tranquil parts of the AONB are those associated with busy road corridors. In order to retain tranquillity in other areas it will be essential that the small volumes of traffic currently associated with much of the rural road network do not increase significantly. **(TR03)**

Public transport

For a rural area the AONB has a relatively well developed public transport system. However, many communities are still without a regular bus service, so they rely heavily on private car use. This results in significant isolation for certain groups, in particular old and young people, who may not have access to a car. Increasingly, local people and visitors will need to seek ways to reduce (or not to increase) car use if their impact on tranquillity, the character of the road network and the community's carbon footprint are not to increase. **(TRP1, TR01, TR06)**

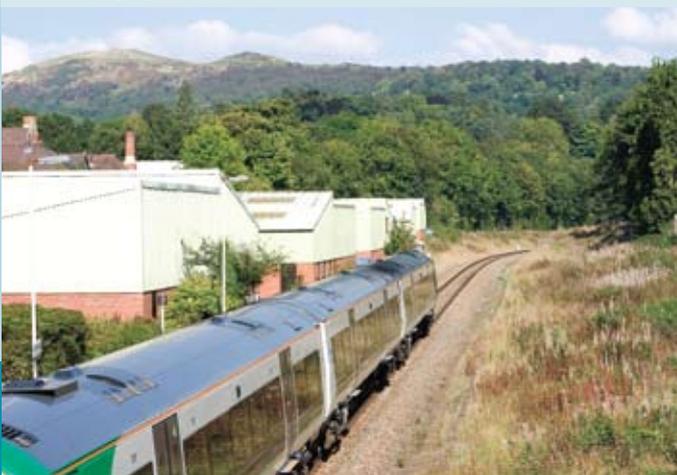
Facilities for walkers and cyclists

There is a shortage of targeted provision for walkers and cyclists, such as safer walking and cycling routes and integrated public transport services, especially in and around built up areas. Shared use routes may also be appropriate for horse riders. **(TRP1, TR04, TR05)**

Unsympathetic and inappropriate road improvement design

The landscape character, biodiversity, historic environment and the tranquillity of rural roads in the AONB can be damaged by unsympathetic, inappropriate design of road improvements and street furniture, even where these are implemented to achieve safety objectives. Overly intensive management of grass verges can impact negatively on biodiversity. **(TR02)**

Travelling by train at Colwall Station



Problems caused by cars parked on verges



Guiding principles

TRP1 The impacts of the private car should be reduced. Wherever possible, local people and visitors should be able to access their desired destinations in the AONB by public transport services and other sustainable alternatives to the private car.

Strategic objectives

TR01 Promote the coordinated planning of integrated bus and rail travel to and within the AONB.

TR02 Ensure that all road and infrastructure improvements (including lighting and signage) are designed and implemented to have minimum impact on the special character of the AONB.

TR03 Collect and monitor information about journey purposes, transport levels and needs in order to direct provision and manage change effectively.

TR04 Identify areas within the AONB that are most vulnerable to speeding traffic, and to visual and noise disturbance etc, and establish a programme of protection and mitigation within the framework of the relevant Local Transport Plans.

TR05 Investigate the development of dedicated routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders within the AONB.

TR06 Develop, support and promote sustainable transport options to meet local transport needs.

Enjoying the Wyche Cutting by bike



4 Monitoring

Two aspects of monitoring are relevant to this plan.

1. Performance monitoring – performance monitoring will occur by assessing the success of the AONB Partnership in implementing an annual action plan. This will be documented in an Annual Report produced each summer.
2. Condition monitoring – this is about the state of the land itself. A core suite of indicators has been selected to measure change in the condition of the key attributes of the area. These include its landscape, biodiversity and built heritage. Information on these indicators will be used to produce a full State of the Malvern Hills AONB report once every five years, starting in 2009. In addition, condition monitoring based on a smaller set of indicators will be carried out annually with information made available on the Malvern Hills AONB website www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk. New indicators may be adopted for monitoring purposes as and when data becomes available. The AONB management plan is intended to improve the condition of the AONB. Condition monitoring will be used to assess whether the management plan has succeeded or failed. Results from condition monitoring activities will also be used to inform future strategies, plans and management activity.

The following table lists the core indicators that have been selected for condition monitoring.⁹

Attribute	Indicator	Indicative of
Landscape	Fixed point photography	Landscape change
Landscape	Agricultural change: i. Farm type ii. Type of land use iii. Area under agri-environmental schemes	Landscape change, changes in agricultural activity and interest in land stewardship
Biodiversity	Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Health of biodiversity on special sites
Geology	Number and condition of Local Geological Sites	Quantity and quality of management of geological sites
Historic and built environment	Condition of Scheduled Ancient Monuments	Health of the nationally important built heritage
Historic and built environment	Condition of listed buildings, parks and gardens	Health of the nationally important built heritage
Tranquillity	CPRE Tranquillity Index	Changes in perceived levels of tranquillity in the area
Enjoyment	Ease of use of rights of way	Accessibility of the access network

⁹This list is subject to amendment based on the availability of data. This may include the selection of additional indicators.

Glossary

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)

AONBs are areas of land, mostly in private ownership, whose distinctive character and natural beauty are recognised to be of national importance. They are designated by Government, through the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949, and represent 18% of the finest countryside in England and Wales. The designation helps to protect their special character through enhanced planning regulations.

AONB Partnership

The AONB Partnership is a working partnership between those who live in, work in and manage the land, and those charged with conserving and enhancing these landscapes and their special features.

Agri-environment schemes

Provided by Natural England, these schemes offer payment to farmers who give an undertaking, or enter into an agreement, to manage their land for biodiversity, landscape, the historic environment, public access or amenity objectives.

Biodiversity

The term given to the variety of life and the natural processes of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

A BAP is a plan, programme, or strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. A BAP is a key means by which the UK Government commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity at Rio de Janeiro (1992) is to be met.

Community

A group of interacting people living in a common location.

Community Strategy

Defined in the Local Government Act 2000 as provision of a new duty and responsibility for local authorities to work closely with others to improve the local quality of life and promote well-being. A Community Strategy links the work of key stakeholders in a local authority area across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

Conservation Area

Designated by the local planning authority as an area which they consider has special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which they consider is desirable to preserve or enhance.

European Landscape Convention (ELC)

The ELC promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. Its emphasis is on local distinctiveness and relevance to people within the landscape. It is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with all dimensions of European landscape.

Geodiversity

The term geodiversity incorporates the variety of rocks, minerals and landforms, and the processes that have formed them through geological time. The breadth of geodiversity gives insight to past climates, earlier environments and life on earth.

Geodiversity Action Plans (GAPs)

GAPs are similar to Biodiversity Action Plans, but are concerned with the protection of geological diversity. The GAP defines long-term objectives and short-term targets and identifies human and financial resources necessary to achieve these. A GAP builds on an audit and/or inventory to determine management requirements for the different geodiversity elements.

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)

An HLC documents the ways in which the present countryside reflects how people have exploited, changed and adapted to their physical environment through time, with respect to different social, economic, technological and cultural aspects of life.

Joint Advisory Committee

This is a formally constituted body made up of representatives from a wide range of public, private and voluntary groups. Its main roles are to coordinate management of the AONB and implementation of the AONB management plan.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

The LCA is a method for identifying, understanding and expressing the different patterns and elements of the landscape. These elements include the woodlands, hedgerows, building styles and historic artefacts that give a place a distinctive character.

Listed building

Listed buildings are structures considered to be of high architectural or historic interest that are placed on a statutory list to help protect their important features. The list is compiled by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on advice from English Heritage.

List of locally important features

Each local authority produces an informal list of locally important features, recommended by the draft Heritage Protection Bill. These represent assets of local special interest as defined by councils.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs)

LAAs set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government, the local authorities, a Local Strategic Partnership (see below) and other key partners in the area. LAAs simplify some central funding, help join up public services more effectively and allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances.

Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)

Since 2004, LDFs are part of the new two-tier structure of the planning system (the higher tier is the Regional Spatial Strategy – see below). The LDF replaces the Structure Plan and the Local Plan. It consists of a number of Local Development Documents (LDDs) including a Core Strategy, Site-Specific Allocations of Land, and a Proposals Map. It may also contain additional optional development documents such as Area Action Plans. Production of the LDF must be accompanied by a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

LSPs are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships that match local authority boundaries. They are a crucial part of the participation process in local development planning and implementation, bringing together public, private, community and voluntary sectors. They help to deliver joint working at the local level to improve public services and meet the needs of local communities.

Local Transport Plans (LTPs)

LTPs are documents produced by local authorities that set out local transport strategies and policies and an implementation programme.

Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)

PPSs are prepared by the government after public consultation. They explain statutory provisions and provide guidance to local authorities and others on planning policy and the operation of the planning system.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

The RSS is part of the two-tier structure of the planning system, alongside the Local Development Framework. The RSS, incorporating a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), provides a broad development strategy for the region for a 15 to 20 year period. It also informs the preparation of the Local Development Documents (LDDs), Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and regional and sub-regional strategies and programmes that have a bearing on land use activities.

Regional Forestry Framework (RFF)

The Regional Forestry Framework is a strategy produced by the Forestry Commission which describes the forestry resource of a region and presents a vision and a set of objectives for the future of forestry in that area. The frameworks are set within a broader strategy, 'A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests', which was produced by Defra in June 2007.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

SSSIs are the best examples of our natural heritage of wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms. A SSSI is an area that has been notified as being of special interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

SEA is a European Directive that requires authorities to prepare a formal assessment of environment impact for certain plans and programmes that are likely to have an effect on the environment. AONB management plans are subject to SEA.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development means meeting four objectives at the same time: social progress that meets the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; and maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

Sustainable communities

Places where people want to live and work, now and in the future, that meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life.

Scheduled Ancient Monument

A Scheduled Ancient Monument is defined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the National Heritage Act 1983 as a protected archaeological site or historic building of national importance. Nationally, these range from prehistoric standing stones and burial mounds to more recent structures such as collieries and wartime pill-boxes. The scheduling of a monument means that permission is required for works affecting that monument.

Social capital

Social capital describes the pattern and intensity of networks among people and the shared values that arise from those networks. While definitions of social capital vary, the main aspects are citizenship, neighbourliness, trust and shared values, community involvement, volunteering, social networks and civic participation.

Sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism is tourism that attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment and the conservation of local ecosystems. It is responsible tourism that is both ecologically and culturally sensitive.

Village Design Statements (VDSs)

VDSs are produced by communities to identify local character and set out design guidance to help guide new development.

Sunset over Mathon and beyond





Little Malvern Priory

Photography credits

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Noble Chafer - *People's Trust for Endangered Species*

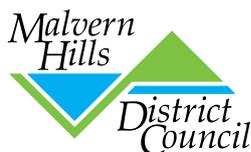
Computer-generated aerial view showing geomorphology of the Malvern Hills AONB -
Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust

Abseiling at Tank Quarry - *Malvern Hills Outdoor Centre*

Children participating in a school Eco project - *Bronwyn Mabey*

Apple juicing in Colwall - *Simon Copeland*

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



Malvern Hills AONB Partnership
Manor House, Grange Road
Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 3EY

Tel: 01684 560616

Fax: 01684 577457

Email: aonb@worcestershire.gov.uk

Web: www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk