Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

State of the Malvern Hills AONB 2009
# Introduction

This report provides a snap-shot of the condition of the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 2009. It does this by presenting information about a range of elements, or attributes, which are deemed to be characteristic of the area.

Where possible, comparisons are made between new data and those presented in the State of the Malvern Hills AONB report for 2006. In this way the reader can begin to understand how the condition of the AONB is changing. This comparison can also be seen as a gauge of the effectiveness of the AONB Partnership in conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the area.

Whilst the text does make brief references to methodology, this report focuses on the presentation of data rather than on why or how it has been collected. Information on the justification and rationale for this work can be found in a report entitled ‘A methodology for monitoring the changing condition of the Malvern Hills AONB’ (Centre for Rural Research, 2006) available at www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk

### Paul Esrich
Manager, Malvern Hills AONB Unit

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View from Fairoaks Farm
Landscape: Fixed point photography

Overview

Landscape Character Assessment is a key tool for identifying and describing variations in landscape character. Drawing upon the work of local authorities in the area, 30 detailed Landscape Description Units (LDUs) can be identified within the Malvern Hills AONB (Figure 1). LDUs are distinct, relatively small areas in which the historical, physical and biological features are similar in their appearance and purpose. Hence, LDUs can be regarded as the individual building blocks of the landscape.

For monitoring purposes, one fixed-point photographic location has been identified for each LDU in the AONB. A mathematically calculated central point, known as a ‘centroid’, has informed the selection of each monitoring point. Photographs and assessments taken from these points provide an indication of the appearance and condition of each LDU.

All images depicted over the subsequent pages were recorded either in February/March 2006 (thumbnail photos) or in late January/February 2009 (larger photos*). The images are organised according to the general appearance of the landscape, known as Landscape Character Type (Figure 1). The LDU number is included simply by way of cross-reference to its geographic location, also shown in Figure 1. Descriptions of Landscape Character Types can be found at www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/pages/managing.

Current condition

The text presented alongside each photograph in the following pages provides a summary assessment of the condition of each LDU in 2009.

Trend in condition

Changes in the condition of landscapes are often only discernable over longer periods of time. However, arrows on the 2009 photographs do highlight some discernable changes in the landscape view since 2006. As is to be expected, such changes are often small-scale. Where no arrows are provided this indicates no change in the landscape view between 2006 and 2009.

*It is recognised that comparing photos of different sizes is not ideal. All images contained in this report can be viewed ‘full screen’ at www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/pages/managing
**Principal Wooded Hills**

**Alfrick (LDU 1)**

**Current condition:**
- Substantial loss of wooded land use to intensive arable cultivation
- Major loss of hedgerows and therefore of organic field pattern
- Very few remaining hedgerow trees

**Suckley Hills (LDU 2)**

**Current condition:**
- Substantial loss of woodland cover
- Introduction of non-native conifers
- Hedges replaced by post and wire fences
- Gardens and orchards associated with new dwellings add a suburban element

**Storridge (LDU 4)**

**Current condition:**
- Some loss of woodland cover and subsequent increase in the proportion of pasture
- Fewer hedgerow trees than might be expected
- Uniformity of woodland age is of concern

![Images of Alfrick, Suckley Hills, and Storridge in 2006 and 2009]
Principal Wooded Hills

West Malvern and Upper Colwall (LDU 5)

Current condition:
- Extensive loss of woodland and consequent increase in pasture
- Some conifer introductions in the vicinity of housing
- The influence of nearby urban areas is evident by the presence of sewage farm structures

Ockeridge (LDU 14)

Current condition:
- Extensive loss of woodland and change of land use to intensive arable cultivation
- Hedgerows are in poor condition with few hedgerow trees

Bradlow Hills (LDU 17)

Current condition:
- Intensive arable production has replaced the wooded character
- Field boundaries are becoming discontinuous
- Significant loss of hedgerow trees
Principal Timbered Farmlands

**Stichin’s Hill, Alfrick** (LDU 3)

*Current condition:*
- Hedgerows are becoming ‘gappy’
- Derelict traditional orchards dominate this Landscape Description Unit

**Mathon Village** (LDU 6)

*Current condition:*
- Intensive arable agriculture undermines the complex, small scale nature of this landscape
- The associated organic enclosure pattern is absent
- Poor tree cover
- Incongruous modern agricultural and residential buildings are evident

**Colwall** (LDU 8)

*Current condition:*
- Species and age variation of trees remain good
- Some arable land use incursion and deterioration in boundary condition is evident
**Principal Timbered Farmlands**

**Colwall Stone (LDU 9)**

**Current condition:**
- Native species such as oak are being replaced with exotics or species associated with other land uses such as the line of poplars.
- Gardens are increasingly disrupting the landscape character, introducing a suburban quality.

**Fairoaks Farm (LDU 24)**

**Current condition:**
- Field re-organisation towards a more planned landscape is evident.
- Woodland is concentrated in one area.
- Arable cultivation has intensified, leading to the loss of hedges.
- Loss of hedgerow trees, those remaining are concentrated along watercourses.

**Whitehouse Farm (LDU 25)**

**Current condition:**
- There has been substantial replacement of hedgerows with post and wire fencing.
- Consequent loss of small scale enclosure pattern.
- Poor age structure of hedgerow trees with derelict trees and evidence of progressing Dutch Elm disease.

![Image](image1.jpg)

![Image](image2.jpg)
**Enclosed Commons**

**Three Counties Showground** (LDU 10)

**Current condition:**
- A landscape highly modified by urbanisation
- Tree cover is sparse with isolated specimens surviving
- Some introduction of conifers
- There has been removal of 19th century enclosure hedges and introduction of fences along different boundaries
- Modern agricultural structures are conspicuous

![2006 Three Counties Showground](image1)

![2009 Three Counties Showground](image2)

**Marlbank** (LDU 11)

**Current condition:**
- Arable cultivation represents a break with the pastoral tradition of this landscape type
- Enclosure boundaries are tightly managed and growing out
- Hedgerow removal is evident as functionality is lost

![2006 Marlbank](image3)

![2009 Marlbank](image4)

**Little Malvern** (LDU 12)

**Current condition:**
- The enclosure pattern is becoming less distinct over time
- Boundary removal and/or replacement is evident, leaving some isolated trees
- Some pastoral land use replaced by arable
- In places this is a smaller scale, more intimate landscape than typical for this landscape type with a greater density of hedgerow trees

![2006 Little Malvern](image5)

![2009 Little Malvern](image6)
Settled Farmlands with Pastoral Land Use

**Newlands, West Castlemorton** (LDU 22)

**Current condition:**
- Intensive agriculture is replacing pastoral land use
- Loss of hedgerows is resulting in larger field size and loss of intimacy through an increase in scale
- Remaining hedgerows are very uniform and becoming gappy with loss of hedgerow trees

**Enclosed Commons**

**Malvern Wells** (LDU 30)

**Current condition:**
- Eastern part now occupied by golf course
- Loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Expansion of urban area into southern part

No image taken in 2006
Wooded Hills and Farmlands

**Eastnor (LDU 18)**

**Current condition:**
- Loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- The pattern of previous field enclosure has largely been lost
- Introduction of fences

**Bronsil (LDU 19)**

**Current condition:**
- Some hedgerow loss and associated loss of hedgerow trees
- Consequent loss of traditional enclosure pattern

**Unenclosed Commons**

**Castlemorton Common (LDU 21)**

**Current condition:**
- A lack of grazing is leading to scrub encroachment
Unenclosed Commons

**Hollybed Common** (LDU 23)

Current condition:
- Scrub encroachment due to insufficient grazing
- Recreational pressure is creating trodden paths across the unimproved grassland

**Malvern Common East** (LDU 28)

Current condition:
- Some intrusion by neighbouring golf course
- Recreational pressure has resulted in erosion and heavily trodden paths
- Degraded grassland

No image taken in 2006

**Malvern Common West** (LDU 29)

Current condition:
- Peripheral formal tree planting has introduced an urban element
- Some scrub encroachment
- Heavy recreational use has resulted in well trodden paths and some ground erosion
- Degraded grassland

No image taken in 2006
Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings

**Wellington Heath (LDU 15)**

Current condition:
- Infill has led to a mixture of settlement types, undermining the distinctive character
- Uncharacteristic features associated with smallholdings, such as ranch style fencing and ‘horsiculture’ are prominent
- The landscape is assuming a suburban appearance

Sandstone Estatelands

**Bromesberrow (LDU 27)**

Current condition:
- The high intensity agriculture is leading to a lack of need for, and thus loss of, distinctive features
- Post and wire fencing replaces hedges
- Arable reversion to pasture

Settled Farmlands on River Terraces

**Beggars Ash (LDU 16)**

Current condition:
- Intensive commercial orchards dominate this Landscape Description Unit
High Hills and Slopes

**Malvern Hills North (LDU 7)**

**Current condition:**
- The open, unwooded character of the landscape is being compromised by scrub and bracken encroachment.
- Significant recreational pressure, with some erosion, is a feature of these northern, highest hills.

**Malvern Hills Central (LDU 13)**

**Current condition:**
- A lack of grazing is leading to encroachment by scrub and bracken.
- Encroachment has reached an advanced stage with the establishment of trees in a sheltered col on the ridge line.
- Heavy recreational pressure is evidenced by distinct, wide paths.

**Malvern Hills South (LDU 20)**

**Current condition:**
- Scrub and woodland encroachment. These southern high hills have greater evidence of woodland surrounding their bare summits than the northern hills.
- There is incursion of scrub and bracken on the hills themselves and in adjacent fields.
- Partial enclosure of lower slopes.
- Visitor pressure is evident from paths in the vegetation, but is generally less acute than in the higher central and northern hills.
- Former quarries are conspicuously colonised by trees and shrubs.
Landscape: Agricultural change

Overview

Current condition

i) Farm type - Farms devoted to livestock farming dominate the agricultural scene. (see Figure 2). Horticultural farms are the second most prevalent holding type (16.7% of holdings). Very small and small-sized farms (those under 20 hectares) overwhelmingly account for the majority of holdings, with only 26 (10.6%) being greater than 50 hectares in size. Reflecting this size structure, just 22.9% of the farm labour force comprised full-time farmers in 2007. The amount of land rented for agriculture remains modest at 21.5%.

ii) Land use - Figure 3 shows that permanent grassland occupies the greatest area in land use terms (55.5%). Cropping (26%) and woodland (7.3%) are other notable land use components. The almost negligible amount of rough grazing recorded (0.8%) is much lower than an impression of the ‘Hills’ might convey, demonstrating the extent of intensive land use (agriculture and woodland) in the AONB.

iii) Area under agri-environment schemes - Table 1 shows the uptake of the main English agri-environmental schemes in the AONB. There are 63 live schemes now covering almost 51% of the eligible land of the AONB.  

iv) Area under woodland grant schemes - Table 2 shows that nine active woodland grant scheme agreements cover 208ha or 10.9% of the wooded area of the AONB. Six grants are for woodland management, four for woodland improvement and two for woodland regeneration.

Trend in condition

As is to be expected, figures for 2007 show only small differences in ‘farm type’ and ‘land use’ from those for 2006. Some caution also has to be exercised due to the sample nature of Defra’s June Agricultural Survey. Nevertheless, with these caveats in mind, some possible trends can be discerned.

- There is a suggestion that enterprise specialisation in the AONB’s farming is still occurring. ‘Cereal’ and ‘Horticulture’ farm types appear to be increasing at the expense of ‘General Cropping’ and ‘Mixed’ classified holdings.

- Dairy farms have declined to such an extent between 2006-7 that Defra will no longer declare the number of them in the AONB (this means that the number of farms is probably less than six).

- The data hint at an ongoing replacement of the full-time farm labour force with part-time labour under both the ‘Farmer’ and ‘Worker’ headings. Much less casual labour was employed in 2007 (7 workers) compared with 2006 (15 workers).

Table 1 shows that since 2006 there has been a decline in the number of Countryside Stewardship agreements and an increase in the number of Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship schemes. This is to be expected as schemes closed to new entrants (Countryside Stewardship) are phased out and new ones phased in. The number of Countryside Stewardship agreements has not decreased dramatically since 2006 but there has been a significant fall in the amount of land covered by these agreements. This can be explained by the fact that many of the early Stewardship agreements were for large areas of land and these agreements have now expired. The smaller schemes were often agreed at a later date when funding was less readily available. These remain in place. Overall there has been a significant (22%) increase in the number of agri-environment agreements in the AONB since 2006 but a smaller (9.5%) increase in the amount of land covered by such schemes.
Figure 2: Farm types in the Malvern Hills AONB, 2007

Figure 3: Land use in the Malvern Hills AONB, 2007

Table 1 – No of active agri-environmental scheme agreements and area of land under such agreements in the Malvern Hills AONB in January 2009 (figures in brackets are for 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of scheme</th>
<th>Number of agreements</th>
<th>Area under agreement (ha)</th>
<th>% of eligible land in AONB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entry level Stewardship</td>
<td>38 (20)</td>
<td>2943 (871)</td>
<td>36% (10.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry level plus Higher Level Stewardship</td>
<td>4 (0)</td>
<td>325 (0)</td>
<td>4% (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Level Stewardship</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>449 (252)</td>
<td>5% (3.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Entry Level Stewardship</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>73 (0)</td>
<td>1% (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside Stewardship Scheme</td>
<td>19 (24)</td>
<td>381 (2659)</td>
<td>5% (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4172 (3782)</td>
<td>51% (45.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Natural England, January 2009 (and 2006)

Table 2 – No of active Woodland Grant Scheme agreements and area of land under such agreements in the Malvern Hills AONB (not including woodland creation grants)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of scheme</th>
<th>Number of agreements</th>
<th>Area under agreement (ha)</th>
<th>% of eligible land in AONB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodland Grant Schemes (WGS)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England Woodland Grant Schemes (EWGS)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>140ha</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>208ha</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forestry Commission, January 2009
Biodiversity: Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Overview
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) have been designated since 1949 to protect the very best of the country’s wildlife and earth heritage (geology, geomorphology). The Malvern Hills AONB has 15 SSSIs either completely or partially within its boundary, representing 10.9% of its total area. The broad habitat and other types of SSSI in the AONB are recorded in Table 3.

Current condition
The most up-to-date information available for this indicator is from 2006. No SSSI has been wholly or partially destroyed and only 2% of the total area is found to be declining in condition (Figure 4 and Table 3). The Government has set a Public Service Agreement (PSA) dedicated to improving the condition of SSSIs. The target is to have 95% of the total SSSI area in favourable or recovering condition by 2010. The Malvern Hills AONB thus achieves 89% of the SSSI area in favourable or recovering condition. This compares very favourably with the 2006 level of 71% of SSSI area reaching the PSA target in the West Midlands Region and 74% across England as a whole.

Trend in condition
No previous data exist to effect a comparison with current condition.

Figure 4: The Condition of SSSIs in the Malvern Hills AONB.

Table 3: The condition of SSSIs in the Malvern Hills AONB according to habitat type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HABITAT TYPE</th>
<th>AREA (ha)</th>
<th>% of AONB SSSI area</th>
<th>CONDITION OF SSSI BY % AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acid Grassland</td>
<td>535.28</td>
<td>46.01%</td>
<td>Favoursible: 100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland</td>
<td>409.07</td>
<td>35.16%</td>
<td>Unfavourable recovering: 10.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth heritage</td>
<td>110.53</td>
<td>9.50%</td>
<td>Unfavourable no change: 21.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral grassland</td>
<td>101.94</td>
<td>8.76%</td>
<td>Unfavourable declining: 15.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcareous grassland</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>0.49%</td>
<td>Destroyed/part destroyed: 100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built up areas and gardens</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Natural England, 2006
**Overview**

A reflection of the exceptional earth heritage of the Malvern Hills AONB is the number of sites that have been designated as Local Geological Sites (previously known as Regionally Important Geological Sites - RIGS). These are selected on the basis of their scientific, educational, historic, or aesthetic value. In 2008, the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust developed a methodology for monitoring the condition of these sites.

There are 47 Local Geological Sites in the Malvern Hills AONB. In 2008 and 2009, 45 (95.7%) of these sites were visited and their condition and management status assessed.1

**Current condition**

Table 4 shows that of the 45 Local Geological Sites visited, 76% are in desirable condition. Just over 15% of sites are classed as undesirable and almost 9% are in uncertain condition. In percentage terms, geomorphological sites tend to be in the best condition (100% classed as desirable), with superficial deposit features in the worst condition (60% classed as undesirable).

With respect to management status (Table 5), 75% of Local Geological Sites are classed as good and slightly more than 24% as poor. Significantly, almost 38% of all visited sites are assessed as being in decline.

**Trend in condition**

In 2006 36 Local Geological Sites (previously RIGS) were designated in the AONB. This number has since risen to 47 (an increase of almost 33%). No previous data exist to effect a comparison with the current condition of these sites.

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**Table 4 – Condition of Local Geological Sites in the Malvern Hills AONB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of site</th>
<th>No. of sites</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
<th>Undesirable</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedrock</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28 (77.8%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superficial deposit feature</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geomorphology feature</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (AONB)</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>34 (75.6%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>7 (15.5%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 (8.9%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5 – Management status of Local Geological Sites in the Malvern Hills AONB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of site</th>
<th>Number of sites</th>
<th>Poor declining/lost</th>
<th>Poor declining</th>
<th>Poor steady</th>
<th>Poor improving</th>
<th>Good declining</th>
<th>Good steady</th>
<th>Good improving</th>
<th>Good lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedrock</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superficial deposit feature</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geomorphology feature</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (AONB)</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 (4.4%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 (11.1%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 (8.8%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>10 (22.2%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 (6.7%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 (2.2%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>20 (44.4%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust, 2008/9

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1 Permissions to access the remaining two sites had not yet been obtained at the time of writing.
Historic and Built Environment:
Condition of Scheduled Monuments

Overview

Scheduled Monuments (SMs) are archaeological sites or historic buildings that are of national importance and have been afforded legal protection by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport on the advice of English Heritage. The Malvern Hills AONB contains eight Scheduled Monuments (Table 6).

Between October 2004 and July 2006 English Heritage assessed the condition and vulnerability of monuments in the West Midlands region through its Monuments at Risk programme, a part of the Heritage at Risk initiative. The information provided in Table 6 is based on the findings of this research, together with more recent assessments of condition in the case of a small number of monuments.1

Current condition2

The overall condition of 63% of monuments in the AONB has been assessed as generally satisfactory with 37% unsatisfactory. In respect of condition trend, 50% of monuments are described as being in declining condition, 38% are stable and 12% are in improving condition. In respect of risk, 25% of monuments in the AONB are considered to be at high risk, 63% at medium risk and 12% at low risk.

When compared with data for the West Midlands as a whole, results show that slightly fewer Scheduled Monuments in the AONB are at high risk (25%) compared with the regional average (29%). However, a higher percentage of monuments in the AONB are at medium risk (63% compared with 34% for the region) and a lower percentage are deemed to be at low risk (12% compared with 37% for the region).

Trend in condition

No previous data exist to effect a comparison with current condition. However, it is noteworthy that work in 2007 and 2008 on British Camp and Bronsil Castle has improved the condition of these monuments and their risk ratings.

Information about the Monuments at Risk programme, including the West Midlands report, can be viewed on the English Heritage website at www.english-heritage.org.uk by clicking on the Heritage at Risk button.

Table 6 – Summary of Scheduled Monument condition and vulnerability in the Malvern Hills AONB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monument</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Overall condition</th>
<th>Condition trend</th>
<th>Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Boundary feature</td>
<td>Generally unsatisfactory – extensive localised problems</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Iron Age hill fort</td>
<td>Generally satisfactory – minor localised problems</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Iron Age hill fort</td>
<td>Generally satisfactory – minor localised problems</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Fortified house</td>
<td>Generally satisfactory – minor localised problems</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Bronze Age round barrows</td>
<td>Generally unsatisfactory – major localised problems</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Monastery</td>
<td>Generally satisfactory – minor localised problems</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Medieval and later building</td>
<td>Generally satisfactory – minor localised problems</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Medieval and post-Medieval feature</td>
<td>Generally unsatisfactory – significant localised problems</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Monuments are not named in this report since some owners may not yet be aware of the results of the Heritage at Risk survey.

2 % figures should be viewed in the knowledge that there are only 8 monuments in the AONB and that these sites are not representative of those in the West Midlands as a whole.

Source: English Heritage, 2008
**Overview**

Listed buildings are buildings or other structures officially designated by English Heritage as being of special architectural, historical or cultural significance. Buildings are graded in one of three categories (Grade I, II* and II) according to their importance with Grade I being the most important.

The most recent figures indicate that there are a total of 344 listed buildings within the AONB. Of these, 329 buildings (almost 96%) were visited between January and March 2008\(^1\). The condition of each building was quickly assessed in accordance with the standard Listed Building at Risk condition methodology developed and used by English Heritage.

The Malvern Hills AONB also contains two listed Parks and Gardens:

- Grade II* Eastnor Castle
- Grade II Hope End

Initial research into the condition of all designed landscapes was carried out by English Heritage in 2008 as part of its Heritage at Risk programme.

**Current condition**

**Listed buildings**

Table 7 shows that 302 (almost 92%) of visited buildings are in fair or good condition. 27 buildings (8%) are in poor or very poor condition and can be classed as at risk. When looking at figures by building grade (Table 8) all Grade I listed buildings are either in fair condition (40%) or good condition (60%). 9% of visited Grade II* listed buildings were found to be in poor condition, 9% in fair condition and 82% in good condition.

**Parks and Gardens**

At the time of publication English Heritage has not officially released information from its Designed Landscapes at Risk survey. However, early indications are that neither of the listed parks and gardens in the AONB are at risk.

**Trend in condition**

No previous data exist to effect a comparison with current condition.

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\(^1\) 15 properties were not visited, either because access was denied or because repairs were being carried out.
Tranquillity: Tranquillity Index

Overview

Tranquillity is one of the special qualities of the Malvern Hills AONB. Its assessment is facilitated by the publication of the tranquillity map of England by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in 2006. The country has been divided into 500m by 500m squares and then scored positively or negatively on 44 factors relating to people’s feeling of tranquillity. Each square is assigned a colour ranging from green (most tranquil) to red (least tranquil) to indicate where people feel most or least tranquil. CPRE hopes to acquire future funding to allow the tranquillity map to be updated.

A full exposition of the methodology can be found in Jackson, S., Fuller, D., Mowbray, R., Hext, S., Macfarlane, R. and Haggett, C. Tranquillity mapping: developing a robust methodology for planning support. Report to CPRE, Centre for Environmental and Spatial Analysis, Northumbria University, Bluespace Environments and the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Current condition

The most up-to-date information available for this indicator is from 2006. Figure 5 shows that the AONB is characterised by moderate tranquillity from the predominance of yellow shading. Tranquillity is geographically uneven within the AONB. The compact nature of the AONB makes it vulnerable to influences immediately beyond its boundary that undermine tranquillity, a factor particularly evident in the east and south. From the map, three distinct pockets of high tranquillity can be observed.

i) South, in a band from Castlemorton Common over Swinyard Hill to Eastnor.

ii) Centre west, between the villages of Colwall and Mathon.

iii) North, encompassing the Suckley Hills.

A lack of tranquillity in the AONB can be observed in five areas due to the influence primarily of roads and settlement.

i) The A449 corridor connecting Ledbury, Malvern Wells and Great Malvern. Great Malvern is the least tranquil place in the entire area, although the situation worsens significantly eastwards towards Malvern Link just beyond the AONB boundary.

ii) The Wyche Cutting provides a route for the B4218 through the high hills and clearly detracts from tranquillity (observe the diagonal line of orange squares running south-west to north-east in the centre of the map).

iii) West Malvern, extending a band of least tranquillity to encircle the northern high hills.

iv) The southern boundary of the AONB, where the presence of the M50 motorway seriously compromises tranquillity.

v) Storridge, where the major Hereford to Worcester A4103 road traverses the north of the AONB.

Trend in condition

No previous data exist to effect a comparison with current condition.
The Malvern Hills AONB

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Tranquillity: Tranquillity Index

Figure 5: Tranquility map: Malvern Hills AONB

Overview

In 2000 the Government announced that it required local authorities to report on the standard of their public rights of way network. This has been assessed through Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 178 defined as "the percentage of the total length of footpaths and other rights of way which are easy to use by members of the public." The percentage is calculated based on an annual survey of a 5% random sample of rights of way within each county.

In the autumn of 2008 a random sample of 5.6% of the total public rights of way network in the Malvern Hills AONB was identified. This was surveyed by trained practitioners using the BVPI 178 methodology employed by Worcestershire County Council.

Current condition

Overall, 73.2% of the public rights of way network in the Malvern Hills AONB can be classed as being easy to use. When disaggregated according to county, easy to use paths were encountered at an incidence of 78.7% in Worcestershire, 58.2% in Herefordshire and 100% of paths in Gloucestershire. Significantly, all of these figures compare favourably with the latest county-wide BVPI 178 scores see final column in Table 9. This suggests that a higher standard of rights of way management is being achieved within the AONB.

Trend in condition

The current condition figures provided in Table 9 are the first to be generated from a dedicated BVPI 178 survey of paths in the AONB. Previously, BVPI 178 data were only available at a county level. The % figures for the AONB for 2002/3 and 2005/6 in Table 10 are thus only indicative and have been derived from the county figures, (calculated according to the percentage of the AONB in each county). The figures for 2008 in Table 10 are based on the dedicated AONB survey described above. It is not possible to compare current and previous data directly but Table 10 does suggest an upward trend in the condition of rights of way in the AONB.

Table 9 – BVPI 178 Results for AONB counties: rights of way that are easy to use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Length of path surveyed (metres)</th>
<th>Rights of way easy to use (metres (%))</th>
<th>County BVPI 178 scores (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire</td>
<td>9497</td>
<td>7471 (78.7)</td>
<td>73.2 (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herefordshire</td>
<td>6361</td>
<td>3702 (58.2)</td>
<td>39% (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire</td>
<td>1539</td>
<td>1539 (100)</td>
<td>78% (2007/8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvern Hills AONB</td>
<td>17379</td>
<td>12712 (73.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AONB Unit, 2009

Table 10 – BVPI 178 Trend Results for AONB counties: % rights of way that are easy to use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>2002/3 (%)</th>
<th>2005/6 (%)</th>
<th>2008 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malvern Hills AONB</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 NB Only four paths in Gloucestershire were assessed as part of the survey.

2 Local authorities divide up their paths in different ways for the purpose of BVPI assessment and this helps to explain differences in the county figures.
The following bodies provide financial support to the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership