

2013
2014

Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Annual Review 2013/14



Chairman's foreword



Cllr John Raine,
Chairman of the
Joint Advisory
Committee

Welcome to the annual review for the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership, covering the period 1 April 2013 - 31 March 2014. This has been a year when considerable strategic work has taken place alongside the Partnership's usual focus on more practical improvements and enhancements to the AONB.

Our strategic work has been dominated by the review of the old AONB management plan and by the production of a new plan for the next five years (page 4). This task is not a voluntary one. There is a legal duty on local authority partners to review AONB management plans. The Partnership acts for the local authorities to discharge this duty and to ensure that the management plan is one that speaks on behalf of all partners and the whole of the AONB. The AONB Partnership has also produced a State of the AONB report this year (page 5), as a companion document to the new management plan. It is of considerable importance in highlighting where the condition of key attributes of this AONB is improving and where it is getting worse. I am very heartened to see that, overall, significant progress has been made in the last five years, despite very difficult economic conditions.

Within the AONB Partnership we are very clear about the important role that sustainable development can play in helping to conserve the area's special qualities. This year has seen the development and expansion of cider making businesses in the AONB (pages 13 and 15) which are helping to sustain our traditional orchards. A coalition of public and private sector partners has supported the development of an exciting 3D map of the area (page 18) whilst the restoration of a water mill at Eastnor also promises to be an exciting new feature of interest for visitors to the area. The Malvern Hills AONB has also joined 'Our Land', a national initiative to promote sustainable tourism within the UK's protected areas (page 18).

It seems to me self-evident that the more positive conservation effort we have the better the AONB will be, both for people and for nature. I was delighted to learn last Autumn about the efforts of the Three Counties Agricultural Society to plant and gap-up hedgerows at the Three Counties Showground, in a part of the AONB which has seen some landscape degradation in the past. I was equally delighted to see the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust get to work on managing its newly acquired nature reserve at Hollybed Farm Meadows. As well as being examples of positive conservation management in their own right it is clear that both of these organisations are keen to engage and work with the AONB Partnership to add even more value to what they do. We are likely to see more collaborations with such partners over the next 12 months.

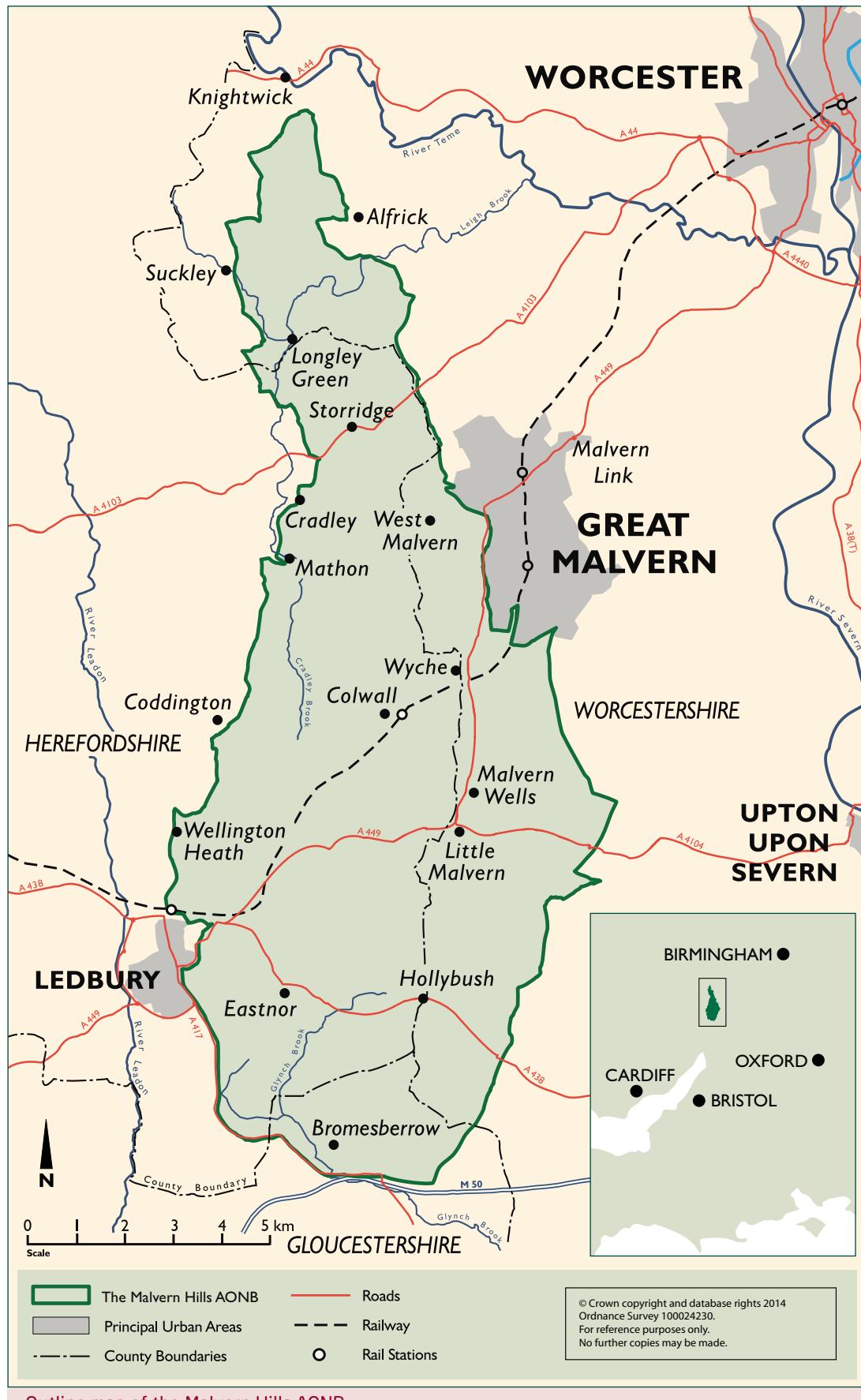
For the present, I hope that you enjoy reading about the work which has taken place over 2013/14. The status of the Malvern Hills AONB as one of England's finest landscapes depends on efforts such as these.

Cllr John Raine, Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee

Reference Numbers

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

Location of the Malvern Hills AONB



Outline map of the Malvern Hills AONB

AONB Management Plan

What is the AONB Management Plan?

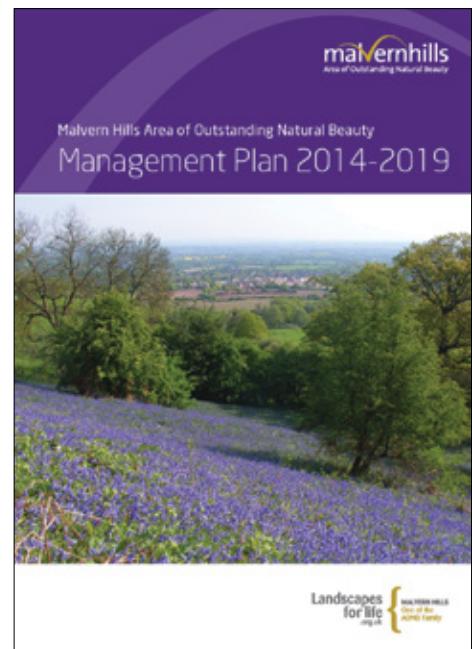
The management plan is the key document through which the AONB Partnership expresses its intentions for conserving and enhancing the special character of the area. It identifies the issues and challenges facing the special features of the AONB and contains policies and objectives which will help address them. The management plan helps those involved in caring for the AONB to:

- Conserve its special qualities.
- Manage the pressures on these qualities.
- Improve the AONB for current and future generations who live in and visit the area.

New five year Management Plan 2014-19

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) places a legal duty on relevant local authorities to produce or review AONB management plans at least every 5 years. A considerable amount of work was carried out in 2013 to review the old management plan (2009-2014) and to produce a new plan for the period 2014-2019. Key tasks carried out during the review included the following:

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current plan.
- Review the current plan against best practice in management plan structure and content.
- Create an online survey and arrange 2 workshops to enable others to submit initial views and opinions.
- Prepare a draft new management plan, followed by consultation with others, inviting comments and amendments before finalisation of the draft.
- Ensure that relevant government agencies such as Environment Agency and Natural England are supportive of the draft.
- Conduct a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/ Sustainability Appraisal of the new management plan.



The new, revised management plan was formally adopted by all relevant local authorities and by DEFRA before being published in March 2014. It can be viewed here:
<http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/documents/FinalLowResManPlan2014-19.pdf>

State of the AONB

What is a State of the AONB report?

A State of the AONB report provides a snapshot of the condition of the Malvern Hills AONB at one point in time. It presents information on specific attributes, for example, landscape and biodiversity, and through a series of different indicators identifies whether that attribute is declining, stable or improving in condition. The report utilises both local and national data and sets to paint as accurate a picture as possible. The State of the AONB report is a companion document to the AONB management plan and can be seen as a measure, albeit a crude one, of the effectiveness of the AONB Partnership.

Work to collect data and compile a 2014 State of the AONB report took place at intervals throughout the year. The final report can be accessed here:

<http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/documents/Finalstateofaonbpdfforwebsite.pdf>

Table 1 – A summary of the condition of the Malvern Hills AONB in 2013/14

Special qualities of the Malvern Hills AONB	Headline indicator (2013)	Equivalent results for 2008 (where available)	Condition trend
Farmed landscape (including the Malvern Hills)	82.0% of the agricultural area is actively managed under the Environmental Stewardship scheme	51.0%	Improving
Woodlands	53.0% of woodland is 'actively' managed	No data	Unknown
Biodiversity	99.7% of the area of all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering' condition.	89.0%	Improving
Biodiversity	84.4% of water courses by length are of moderate water quality. 15.6% are of poor water quality. 66.7% of groundwater bodies are of good water quality. 33.3% are of poor water quality.	No data	Unknown
Geodiversity	100% of earth heritage Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are in favourable condition.	86.9%	Improved to maximum
	61.5% of Local Geological Sites are in desirable condition	75.6%	Declining
Built heritage	100% of Scheduled Monuments in satisfactory condition	63%	Improved to maximum
	91.9% of listed buildings are in good or fair condition	91.8%	Stable
Tranquility	49.1% of AONB is of very high tranquillity 13.3% of AONB is of very low tranquillity	All data are from 2006	Unknown
Enjoyment	77.4% of public rights of way network is easy to use	73.2%	Improving

Landscape

Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancement Grants (L05)

The AONB Partnership provided a contribution of just over £2,000 to achieve £6,000 worth of small-scale landscape and biodiversity improvements in 2013/14. Three landowners shared this funding to help deliver a range of outputs including:

- 207 metres of species-rich hedge planted.
- 190 metres of hedgerow laid and trees planted in the hedgerow.
- Management advice to owners of traditional orchards.

AONB enhancement grants are aimed at smaller landowners who are not usually in receipt of agri-environment support. Unfortunately this grant stream has been reduced in size because of budget cuts.



Hedgelaying at Poolbrook

Orchard after removal of overhead lines, Eastnor

Burying Overhead Electricity Cables (L02)

The national scheme to improve the beauty of National Parks and AONBs has continued to deliver in the Malvern Hills AONB. Western Power Distribution commenced a significant amount of work this year to remove almost 3.5km of overhead powerline from Eastnor Estate (around Goldhill Farm) and Eastnor Village. New underground cable is being laid in its place.



Landscape Enhancement at the Three Counties Showground (LO2, LO3)

During the Autumn of 2013 the estate team at the showground worked hard to carry out additional improvements to this very popular site. Woodland copses have been managed, hedges have been 'gapped-up' and an old hedge line which was removed long ago has been reinstated. These works enhance the landscape of this part of the AONB and will also be beneficial to wildlife. They form part of a mini landscape plan which has been produced by the Three Counties Agricultural Society working alongside the AONB Partnership, Malvern Hills District Council and local landscape architect Carly Tinkler.

Monitoring Landscape Condition (LO4)

During 2013-14 landscape monitoring work commissioned by the AONB Partnership was carried out by the University of Worcester. 30 fixed point sites were visited and photographed. The images recorded were analysed against images taken at the same sites five years ago. The results revealed a fairly stable picture. In the majority of cases (80%) there has been no discernable change in condition. 10% of sites displayed evidence of an improvement in condition with the remaining 10% showing signs of a decline in condition compared to five years ago. The results of this monitoring were used to inform the landscape section of the State of the AONB report 2014, which can be accessed online at:
[http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/documents/
Finalstateofaonbpdfforwebsite.pdf](http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/documents/Finalstateofaonbpdfforwebsite.pdf)



New hedge planting at the showground



Monitoring work

In brief

- Colwall Orchard Group successfully planted a third perimeter hedge at their village orchard site as well as 47 fruit trees within the hedgerows (LO2, LO3).

Management Plan references

Management Plan references

LO2 – Restore distinctive landscapes and landscape features.

LO3 – Identify and promote opportunities for positive landscape change.

LO4 – Undertake survey and research to better understand and monitor the condition and rate of change of landscape character.

LO5 – Seek resources to promote landscape management and improvements.

Biodiversity

Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project (B01, B02, B07)

Traditional orchards are a priority habitat for conservation in the UK and are of particular importance to the three counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. In 2013/14 the Heritage Lottery Fund provided a grant to enable the AONB Unit to develop the details of a three year project to conserve traditional orchard heritage. Much development work was carried out during the year and a second phase funding bid has now been submitted. We are hopeful that we will receive funding to start the full project late in 2014. Updates will be posted online at www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/orchard_project.html

The Malvern Hills and Commons (B01, B04)

Malvern Hills Conservators have continued their programme of grazing on the hills and commons to help maintain the condition of the nationally important grassland. Practical vegetation management has also been carried out, including 52ha of scrub removal. Other tasks carried out by both wardens and volunteers include: black poplar planting, coppice restoration, hay-cutting and also the erection of new signage for visitors about ground-nesting birds.



Adder tracking success (BP2, B01, B03)

The Malvern Hills are one of the last significant refuges for adders in the West Midlands. Adder populations in many areas have been in steady decline over the years and their habits and habitats need to be better understood in order to help arrest this. The AONB Partnership provided funding to Nigel Hand of the Herefordshire Reptile and Amphibian Trust to track the male adders as they sought females in the spring. Pill-sized radio transmitters were attached to their backs and, with the help of volunteers, they were followed. The findings of the study will help to inform the new Management Plan being produced by the Malvern Hills Conservators.

Management Plan references

BP2 – The fragmentation of key biodiversity habitats should be avoided and reversed.

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

B02 – Restore the condition of degraded habitats in line with local and UK BAPs.



Male adder

Cattle Drinkers on watercourses in the AONB (B02, B04)

The Leigh, Suckley and Cradley brook walkover report, carried out in 2012, identified several water management issues in the AONB needing to be addressed. In the Leigh Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) it was noted that cattle were eroding the banks and causing sedimentation of the water course where they had no alternative fresh water drinking supply. This was especially significant on the Suckley Brook. To combat this issue a purpose-built cattle drinker has been erected at the Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve and another on farmland in Suckley. These utilise locally sourced materials and have been designed to fit in with the surrounding landscape.

Hollybed Farm Meadows

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust has recently added to its portfolio of Nature Reserves in the AONB by securing Hollybed Farm Meadows on a short-term lease. This fantastic site, in the South East of the AONB, contains species rich grassland and hedgerows, a traditional Perry Pear orchard and alder woodland.

The plan is to purchase the land outright to ensure that it remains under the care of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. An appeal to raise £480,000 was announced; details can be found at: <http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/fields-of-gold>

Worcestershire County Council Orchard Grants (B02, B07)

During 2013-14, as part of a Traditional Orchard Restoration Project, Worcestershire County Council offered grants of up to £500 per orchard to voluntary organisations, schools, community groups and private landowners.

The grants were intended to help restore orchards that are at risk due to age or neglect. The money was used for work such as tree pruning, new planting, clearing scrub or carrying out fence repairs to enable orchards to be grazed. It was also used to source training from local experts on best practice orchard restoration and management. Five grants were awarded to sites within or close to the boundary of the AONB. Four of these are already listed Local Wildlife Sites; the fifth will be assessed for possible designation as a Local Wildlife Site in 2014.



Cattle Drinker at the Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve



Hollybed Farm meadows

Management Plan references

B03 – Enhance the wildlife value of the countryside and achieve greater connectivity.

B04 – Ensure that 98% of all SSSI area is in favourable or recovering condition by 2014.

B07 – Promote greater understanding and enjoyment of the biodiversity resources of the AONB.

Geodiversity



Geological monitoring work

Monitoring of Local Geological Sites (GO3, GO5)

During 2013-14 geological monitoring work commissioned by the AONB Partnership was carried out by staff and volunteers from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust. 13 Local Geological Sites were randomly selected from the 47 designated sites within the AONB and were formally monitored for their condition and status. Based on the results, recommendations have been made for improved future management. The results of this monitoring were used to inform the geodiversity section of the State of the AONB report 2014, which can be accessed online at: http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/condition_monitoring.html

Geofest 2013 (GO2)

Over 20 geological events, including walks, talks, children's activities, field trips, workshops and exhibitions were led by members of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust within the AONB between May and August 2013. The majority of these were part of the 2013 Geofest



The Geocentre in the Wyche Innovation Centre

which was launched at the new Geocentre in the Wyche Innovation Centre in the heart of the AONB. As in previous years the festival proved incredibly popular and played an important role in educating the public in the geological history and splendour of the AONB and its surrounds.

Building with Stones Project off to a great start (GO2)

During 2013/14 the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust received funding from the Heritage Lottery to run its 'A Thousand Years of Building with Stone' Project. Three members of staff have been recruited and are now getting stuck into the challenge ahead. The project, which investigates the geological and social links between quarries and historic stone buildings in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, is well underway. In the past year volunteers have had the chance to attend a variety of free training workshops, such as Using the Hive Archives and A Beginners Guide to Geology and Building Stones. Scoping work has already been carried out on some sites within the AONB and further work will continue over the months to come.

In brief

- Malvern Hills Conservators held two volunteer sessions to clear vegetation from Site of Special Scientific Interest exposures at Tank Quarry. (GP2)

Management Plan references

GP2 – Demonstrate best practice in geodiversity management within and adjacent to designated sites.

GO2 – Promote greater understanding of the geology of the AONB

GO3 – Undertake survey, research and monitoring to secure complete information on the state of the AONBs geodiversity resource.

GO5 – Monitor climate change and its effects on the geodiversity resource of the AONB

Historic Environment

Clencher's Mill restoration (H01, H03)

Located on the Eastnor Estate, Clencher's Mill is a rare survival of a grade II listed, 18th century timber-framed water mill. It retains most of its internal workings, including a pair of millstones and an iron overshot waterwheel dating to 1820. During 2013/14 the estate made considerable progress towards restoring the mill to full working order. Funding support provided by Natural England and the AONB Partnership helped towards the repairs of the mill leat pond wall and future interpretation for the site. Works to fully restore the mill should be complete by the end of 2014.



Clencher's Mill leat pond (drained)

Repairs made to the Shire Ditch (H01)

The Shire Ditch or Red Earls Dyke was constructed in 1287 by the Earl of Gloucester following a dispute with the Bishop of Hereford over hunting rights. The earthwork extends along the top of the Malvern

Hills from north of the Wyche cutting to the south of Midsummer Hill and is in variable condition along its length. With the help of English Heritage, the Malvern Hills Conservators carried out sympathetic works to a section much in need of repair. Local Malverns Complex stone was used to restore an area damaged through erosion by walkers and bikers. The gully was infilled and the domed cross-section was reinstated over 110 metres on Broad Down.



Shire Ditch repairs

Local List edges closer (H02)

Malvern Hills District Council began consultation on a Local List Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for buildings/structures/historic landscapes of local interest. The purpose of the SPD is to set out criteria and procedures by which such assets will be added to the Local List. When the SPD has been adopted the local community and council can decide which buildings/structures/historic landscapes could be added to the List as "Local Heritage Assets". This will help to ensure that their value is recognised when the council makes future decisions affecting them.

Management Plan references

H01 – Preserve, conserve and enhance. Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas and features of historic interest.

H02 – Undertake surveys and research to secure and document information on the historic environment.

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.

In Brief

- During the creation of Colwall Community Orchard, old tree planting stations were plotted and a plan of surviving ridge and furrow was recorded for future reference. (H03)
- In October 2013 a range of experts from English Heritage visited the Malvern Hills AONB as part of a two-day national workshop. They discussed perspectives for understanding and protecting the historic character and significance of heritage features within their landscape and settlement context. Bromesberrow Estate kindly hosted a field visit. (H02).

Farming and Forestry

Environmental Stewardship (F01, F02 and F03)

The Environmental Stewardship programme provides grants to landowners to practice good environmental management. Within this programme the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) scheme provides some environmental benefits, whilst the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme provides grants to support the maximum environmental outcomes. Two new HLS agreements commenced this year, one at Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's Hollybed Farm Meadows Nature Reserve and another on the Bromesberrow Estate. These schemes cover over 415 ha and will deliver:

- Creation and restoration of traditional orchards.
- Protection and restoration of historic parkland.
- Management and extension of species-rich grassland.
- Management of extensive grassland.



Woodland management, Gullet Wood

Ancient Woodland Restoration Project (F02, F03)

Ancient Woodland is one of the country's most precious habitats, supporting 232 of the rarest and most vulnerable species. However, it is under increasing threat and today only covers 2% of the UK. During the year The Woodland Trust secured £1.9 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a four year project to restore ancient woodlands in 10 priority areas around the UK. One of these ten areas is Herefordshire and West Worcestershire, including the Malvern Hills AONB. The project aims to work with a range of landowners and organisations to help establish positive management and restoration techniques that will deliver healthy, thriving, restored ancient woodlands and a range of benefits for people too. Staff from the AONB unit met with the area's Project Officer early in the project to discuss opportunities for joint working. It is hoped that the AONB will benefit from new management of ancient woodland in the near future.



Ledbury Food Group Market at Ox Roast

Ledbury Food Group (F05)

The bounty of the local landscape is the harvest in the local markets. The Ledbury Food Group and the Malvern Hills Food Alliance both received a grant from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund to promote markets for local foods. The projects were also supported by the Plunkett Foundation and Campaign to Protect Rural England. Outputs from this work included talks, events and websites.

Biochar 2 SDF (F02)

Biochar is a relatively new product from coppice woodlands that makes use of the small twigs and branches that are usually burnt on site. By making these into charcoal, they can be turned into a soil improver and sold, thus reducing waste. However, standard charcoal kilns need to be adapted to enable this to happen. Wildwood Coppice Crafts, a company which manages coppice woodlands within the AONB, received a grant of £2,000 from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund to design and build a bespoke kiln to make Biochar. Biochar is available through the website: www.wildwoodcrafts.com



Biochar soil conditioner

Forestry Agreements (F01)

The Forestry Commission continued its ongoing regulatory and grant provisioning work to encourage good woodland management in the AONB, particularly in supporting activities which help to reverse the decline in the numbers of woodland birds. Highlights included:

- Ancient Woodland restoration in Ravenshill Wood.
- 0.18ha woodland creation at Sleepy Hollow farm, Storridge.
- Coppicing in Frith Wood, Ledbury and in News Wood on the Eastnor Estate.
- 800 metres or 2.34ha of woodland edge thinning and fence replacement in Mathon.
- General woodland improvement operations to improve habitat for target bird species like Marsh Tit and Spotted Flycatcher. This included re-fencing to prevent grazing from neighbouring stock fields, restoration of old hedgerow (re-coppiced and gapped up) and thinning of woodland edges to improve structure.

In brief

- A new cider-making business – ‘Ragged Stone Cider’ – was established on Bromesberrow Estate using apples from the Estate orchards. Some new orchard planting also took place. (F05)
- Colwall Orchard Group leased part of Colwall Village Garden to the Colwall Allotment Society for organic fruit and vegetable growing and to market sustainably produced fruit juice, honey and preserves. All fruit and vegetables used in any produce are sourced from within five miles of Colwall Stone.



Scarecrow at Colwall Allotments

Management Plan references

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

F02 – Bring characteristic habitats into favourable conservation condition

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

F05 – Increase the production and consumption of local food and land-based products.

Community - Living & Working



Eastnor Cricket Club Pavilion

New Pavilion for village cricket club (CP1)

Thanks to assistance from the England and Wales Cricket Trust, Sport England and the Eastnor Castle Estate, Eastnor Cricket Club has a brand new pavilion.

To accommodate the new structure the previous building, which was opened in 1984, has been demolished. As the pavilion lies both within the AONB and the Eastnor Castle Estate, considerable care has been taken over its aesthetic appearance and the sustainability of its facilities. The pavilion has full disabled access, two large dressing rooms with integral toilets and showers and an enlarged social room with bar and kitchen. It is hoped the new pavilion will encourage young sporting talent and bolster the local community.

Colwall Orchard Group thriving (CO2, CO3)

Colwall Orchard Group is a local group run and staffed entirely by volunteers whose work benefits the community as well as biodiversity and landscape. During the winter of 2013-14 weekly work parties were held to carry out hedgerow and orchard planting, orchard management and harvesting. Volunteers also ran orchard-based events including a Blossom Picnic and Apple Day where products made from the orchards produce can be purchased. Colwall Orchard Group continued to provide advice to individuals and groups during the year and carried out work in several traditional orchards and gardens. The group sold approximately 150 fruit trees that will be planted within the AONB. Colwall's community orchard now boasts 143 trees, as well as several in the children's play area. The group actively encourage visits to their community site by Care Farms, Scouting groups and schools. [uk/publications.html](#)



Colwall Orchard Group volunteers



Children planting fruit trees at Colwall

Fruit tree planting at Colwall Primary School (CP1, CO2)

In November 2013 the AONB Partnership and the National Tree Council supported the purchase and planting of new fruit trees next to Colwall Primary School. Members of the Colwall Orchard Group helped to identify the right varieties of tree for the locality and assisted children from the school and from Bright Sparks Nursery in planting the trees. With luck the children will soon be enjoying fresh apples.



New bottling unit

New bottling Unit for Local Business SDF (CP1)

A Ledbury Cider maker, who has traditional orchards, needed a bottling line to expand his business and keep his orchards productive. With good luck, there was a second-hand one available within the Malvern Hills AONB. With the local banks refusing to help, the AONB Sustainable Development Fund provided a £1,000 grant to help to buy the line. The line is now installed, bottling cider and making profits. The grantee has since made a voluntary contribution to the Malvern Hills AONB in gratitude for its help with the purchase.

In brief

- The annual Joint Advisory Committee study tour was once again a great success. The committee enjoyed a day 'in the field' at Eastnor Estate, learning about the management of the Estate and about other current challenges and initiatives in the AONB.

Joint Advisory Committee study tour



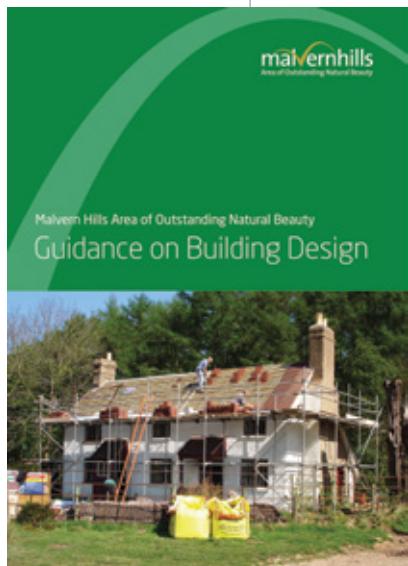
Management Plan references

CP1 – Enable vibrant communities to grow sustainably.

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

CO3 - Foster opportunities for training in conservation and agriculture.

Built Development



Building Design Guidance (DP2, D04)

The first ever Building Design Guidance for the Malvern Hills AONB was completed in late 2013. The purpose of the document is to provide direction on how new development can make a positive contribution to the natural beauty of the AONB. Copies of the guidance were sent to those involved in development in the AONB and to other interested parties. So far, the response to this guidance has been very positive and it looks set to be of use for many years to come.

Solar Panels on Colwall Village Hall (DP3)

During 2013 new Solar Panels were installed on the roof of Colwall Village Hall. The environmentally friendly panels will help to reduce energy bills whilst also creating income through feed in tariffs (FITs). A meter on show to the public registers energy generation in real time. The panels conform to the AONB guidance notes on small scale renewable installations and were part funded by a grant from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

Colwall Village Hall with solar panels installed



Neighbourhood Plans (D02)

The Localism Act of 2011 allows local communities to shape new development by coming together to produce Neighbourhood Plans. These plans give local people a strong voice on issues such as where development takes place and what it looks like. In 2013/14 a number of local communities in the Malvern Hills AONB have worked towards the preparation of these plans or are on the verge of doing so. These include Colwall, Cradley and Ledbury in Herefordshire; and Malvern Wells and Welland in Worcestershire. The AONB Unit is supporting and working with local communities in this process. We are keen to ensure that relevant parts of AONB policy and guidance are incorporated within Neighbourhood Plans since these will be statutory documents once approved.

New development pressures

In 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published, with the aim of boosting the number of houses permitted through the planning system. This, coupled with the absence of a five year housing supply for Herefordshire and Malvern Hills District, has seen an increase in proposals for development within and adjacent to the AONB. During 2013/14 the AONB Unit has worked with partners to try and ensure that the natural beauty of the AONB is conserved.

In brief

- Colwall Orchard Group obtained phase one approval from 'Our Heritage' for the restoration of the old Apple Packing Shed. (DP2)
- CPRE continue their important work to monitor planning applications in the Malvern Hills District and to consider the special features and character of the AONB when responding with comments. (DP9)
- Bromesberrow Estate re-thatched the Grade II listed South Lodge. (DP3)



Apple packing shed



South Lodge, Bromesberrow

Management Plan references

DP2 – Development control should be guided by emerging characterisation studies.

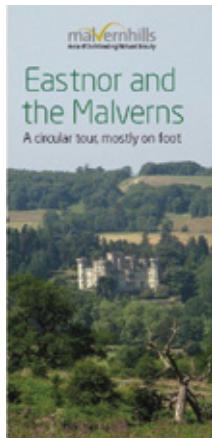
DP3 – Development should be subject to high standards of design and sustainability that reflect local character.

DP9 – In exercising development control decisions, opportunities should be sought to positively enhance the special features and character of the AONB.

D02 – Support the production of community-led plans, strategies and statements.

D04 – Develop a programme of guidance on key planning and design issues appropriate to the AONB.

Tourism, Recreation & Access



Eastnor and the Malverns Walk Leaflet (T01, T02)

Eastnor Estate and the Malvern Hills AONB Unit combined to produce a leaflet for a circular walking tour, using a local train service to link the beginning to the end. The walk starts at Ledbury railway station, proceeds to Eastnor, crosses the Deer Park to the obelisk, then on the Malvern Hills and down to Colwall Railway station. The leaflet provides directions and identifies points of interest along the way. It is available from the AONB office, (email aonb@worcestershire.gov.uk) and in the local Tourist Information Centres.



3D electronic map

Interactive 3D Map at new Geocentre (T01, T05)

The Malvern Hills AONB has been recreated in high resolution on a 3D electronic map. The map sits on a new interactive website and has been created with financial support from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund. It is hoped that the map will help to promote the area to visitors and residents alike, further bolstering the local economy. Users can locate features of interest in the area - from heritage spots to places to grab a coffee - by clicking on tabs which then create markers on the map. The groups behind the project (Virtual Experience Company and the Technology for Tourism Group) say that further work is expected on the site and that mobile phone and tablet applications are future possibilities for the technology.

Visit www.virtualexperience.co.uk/virtualmalvern to try out the map.



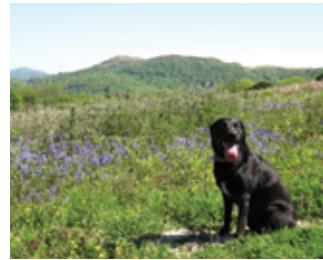
Our Land website

Malvern Hills AONB joins Our Land (TP1, T01)

Our Land is a collaboration between protected landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) and a private sector tourism company. It aims to develop and promote sustainable rural tourism in the country's finest landscapes and to offer something 'better' than the short haul break abroad. Our Land engages and promotes local businesses which demonstrate a commitment to their local landscape, community and environment. This is exactly the kind of sustainable tourism that the AONB Partnership hopes to promote in the future, so if you know of a business that might qualify, please contact the AONB office or visit the 'Our Land' website for more information www.our-land.co.uk

Dooup - Where there's muck, there's gas (T04, T05)

In 2013 the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) provided grant support to a local Ledbury company - 'Dooup' - to develop a portable dog poo collector. The aim is to develop and promote a product that presents a handy solution to a source of much disgust to visitors to the area. The campaign hopes to capitalise on the company's recent appearance on the 'Dragon's Den' television programme. Minds are also working on how to use this waste in an anaerobic digester to help power Malvern's gas lamps.



Route to the Hills update

Route to the Hills is the name of a project led by Malvern Hills District Council to link the town of Malvern to the Malvern Hills, with the right infrastructure such as signage and interpretation to help maximise social and economic benefits. The project has received a development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and consultants have been employed to put together a second bid for the delivery stage. The AONB Partnership has contributed £2,000 to the development stage work and is currently Vice Chair of the Project Board.



Route to the Hills display

In brief

- Due to popular demand a reprint of the Malvern Hills AONB Literary Trail was carried out in 2013, supported by the AONB Sustainable Development Fund. This was used in conjunction with a guided tour in June 2013. The leaflet can also be found online at http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/themed_guides.html (T01, T03)
- Herefordshire Archaeology Service contributed to a public guided walk on Midsummer Hill, promoting better understanding of an important historic environment asset in the AONB, including the issues caused by visitor impacts. (T05)
- Herefordshire Council Countryside and Parks Service continued work to maintain an excellent standard on their Public Rights of Way within the AONB. (T02)
- Malvern Hills Conservators maintained the access infrastructure on 1200ha of land within the AONB. (T02)

Management Plan references

TP1 – Development and management of tourism should take place within a framework of sustainability.

T01 – Encourage and stimulate sustainable tourism and recreational use of the AONB.

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 hills and commons.

T05 – Encourage greater awareness and understanding of the AONB.

Summary and Budget

AONB Unit Performance Indicators

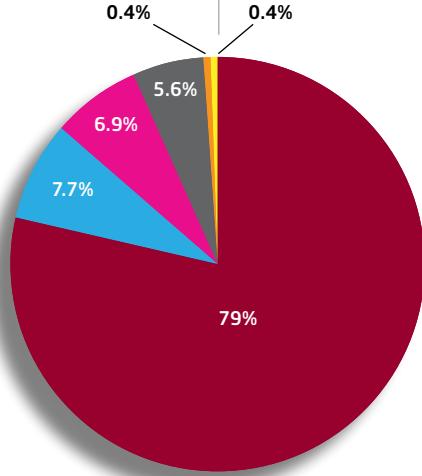
A framework for monitoring AONB Partnership performance is in place. The performance of the Malvern Hills AONB Unit in 2013-14 is summarised in the following table.

Theme	Measure for the indicator	Definition	Performance
AONB Management Plan	The AONB Partnership has a current Management Plan which meets the requirements of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.	The Plan has been reviewed within five years of the last one; it conforms to the guidance for AONB Management Plans provided by Natural England; it has been formally adopted and published by all the relevant local authorities.	Yes
AONB Partnership	The AONB has an active and effective governance structure.	Record of regular Joint Advisory Committee and Steering Group meetings.	5 meetings
		AONB has undertaken a formal review of its governance structures within the last 5 years and has an adopted current set of terms of reference	Yes
AONB Staff Unit	The AONB Unit has staff resources to undertake its work.	Total the number of AONB staff, in full-time equivalents, that were directly managed and hosted by the AONB Unit, at the financial year end.	2.6
	AONB Unit staff invests in continuous professional development.	Of the total in the Measure above, list the number who undertook and recorded a minimum of 30 hours of training, personal development or similar during the year .	2.6
Financial resources	The AONB Unit secures direct income to fund its work.	Total income received into the AONB Unit's own account from all sources during the financial year.	Total £193,533
		The percentage of the figure above which was received from Defra and Local Authorities	99.9%
		The amount received from Defra and Local Authorities	Total £193,303
Leverage and "added value"	Additional resources mobilised by AONB Unit through its partnership work	Total direct funding received plus the total funding for projects and partnership programmes including matching income for SDF funded projects, total funds for HLF Project etc.	Total £550,833
		The percentage of the figure above which was received from Defra.	27%
Financial management and reporting	Agreed timetable and requirements for financial management and reporting with Defra met by the AONB unit	The Unit submitted its final grant claim to Defra by the required date.	Yes
		Published its annual report for the preceding year within six months of the financial year end.	Yes
		Submitted its business plan and grant application for the succeeding financial year by the required date.	Yes
Partnership working with management communities	The AONB Unit is an active partner in the work of the National Association for AONBs.	The AONB Unit (through its host authority or partnership organisation) was a full member of the National Association for AONBs.	Yes
		Was represented by attendance at the Annual Conference of the Association.	Yes
		All AONB Unit core staff attended at least one other national or regional NAAONB sponsored event.	Yes
	The AONB Unit is actively involved in partnership working at a local level.	Total number of project steering groups, research initiatives, working groups and partnerships where the AONB Unit played an active and key role.	6
	The AONB Management Plan is formally endorsed and supported by partner organisations.	List the number of organisations who formally endorsed the plan when written and at the last review.	7

AONB Unit Financial Summary

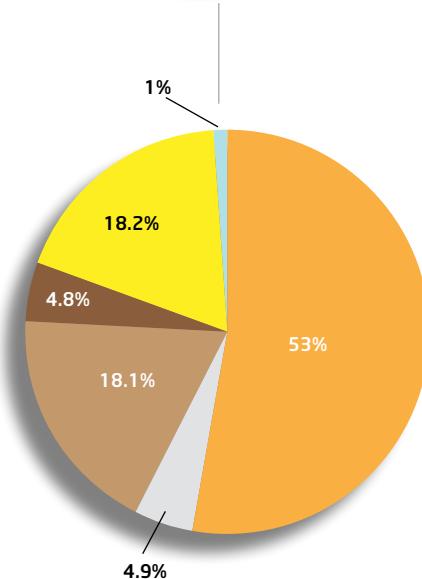
CORE INCOME

Defra	150,750
Herefordshire Council	14,647
Worcestershire County Council	13,268
Malvern Hills District Council	11,000
Gloucestershire County Council	766
Forest of Dean District Council	872
Total	£191,303



CORE EXPENDITURE

Staff costs (inc travel and training)	101,183
Accommodation and office costs	9,346
Partnership budget	34,823
Partnership running costs	9,237
Sustainable Development Fund	34,792
Transfer to reserve	1,922
Total	£191,303



ADDITIONAL INCOME

Herefordshire Council	2,000*
Voluntary contribution	230
Total	£2,230

STAFF

The Unit structure for the year was as follows:

AONB Partnership Manager	Paul Esrich
AONB Partnership Assistant Manager	David Armitage
AONB Partnership Support Officer	Sarah Baker
AONB Project Development Officer	Karen Humphries

* Receipt in advance
for Three Counties
Traditional Orchard
Project

AONB Governance

Joint Advisory Committee 2013-14

Elected Members:

Prof J Raine (Chairman)	Malvern Hills District Council
Mr P Bettington (Vice-Chairman)	Herefordshire Council
Mr J Fryman	Worcestershire Association of Local Councils
Mrs N Carless	Herefordshire Association of Local Councils
Mr P Tuthill	Worcestershire County Council
Dr K Pollock	Worcestershire County Council
Mr T Johnson	Herefordshire Council
Mr C Cheeseman	Malvern Hills District Council
Mr R Yeates	Forest of Dean District Council (also representing Gloucestershire County Council)

Non-Elected Members:

Mrs G Rees	Malvern Hills Conservators
Mrs S Faulkner	National Farmers Union
Mr I George	English Heritage
Mr M Ashton	Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce
Mr J Hervey-Bathurst	Country Landowners and Business Association
Mr W Barnes	Forestry Commission
Prof R Bryant	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust
Mr F Hill	Campaign to Protect Rural England
Ms D Griffiths	Natural England

Co-opted Members:

Mr A Lee	Herefordshire Local Access Forum
----------	----------------------------------

Steering Group 2013-14

Andy Maginnis (Chairman)	Worcestershire County Council
Stephen Bound	Malvern Hills Conservators
Sian Hughes	Malvern Hills District Council
James Bisset	Herefordshire Council
Robert Niblett	Gloucestershire County Council
Nigel Gibbons	Forest of Dean District Council

Photography credits

All photographs copyright Malvern Hills AONB Unit except:

Male adder - *Nigel Hand*

Family fossil foray - *Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust*

Midsummer Hill - *Malvern Hills Conservators*

Restored cider mill - *Malvern Hills Conservators*

Grazing on North Hill - *Malvern Hills Conservators*

The night sky from the Wyche Cutting - *Chris Baddiley*

Jubilee Bonfire - *Malvern Hills Conservators*

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