



The primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty (which includes wildlife and cultural heritage, as well as scenery). In pursuing this, agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and social and economic needs are taken into account.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland there is a huge variety of scenery and landscapes. Those landscapes considered most valuable are designated as National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and are protected by law. They are managed to maintain their special character for now and the future.

What is an AONB?

Cannock Chase AONB

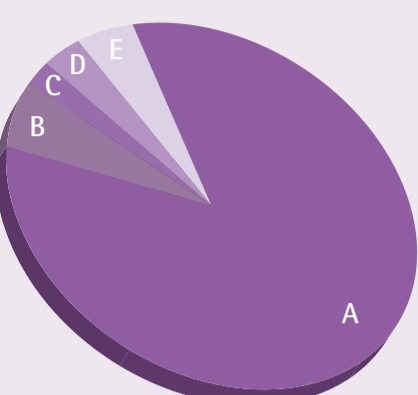
The AONB has significant areas of lowland heath, extensive areas of forestry (around 40%) and also designed parkland, sand and gravel quarrying and mixed agriculture. Around 58% of the AONB has public access. Around 12,000 people live within the AONB, with thousands more living within a 15km radius of the place.

There is considerable economic and recreational pressure on this beautiful landscape and the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan aims to ensure the right balance is maintained to conserve and enhance the area whilst sustaining it as a living, working environment.

Cannock Chase was designated as an AONB in 1958, principally for its lowland heathland and is one of 46 in the UK. Some of its special characteristics include its wildlife, geology and military, social and industrial history. At 6800ha (26 square miles) it is the smallest mainland AONB and much cherished and visited by people.

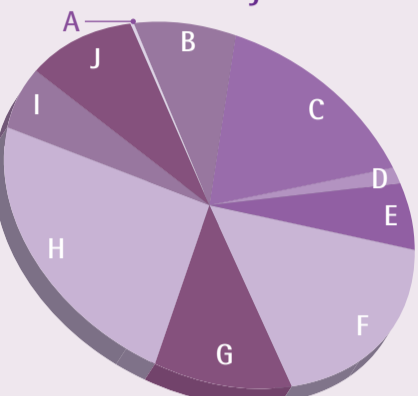
Finances 2013-14 for Cannock Chase AONB Core and Project Costs

AONB Core



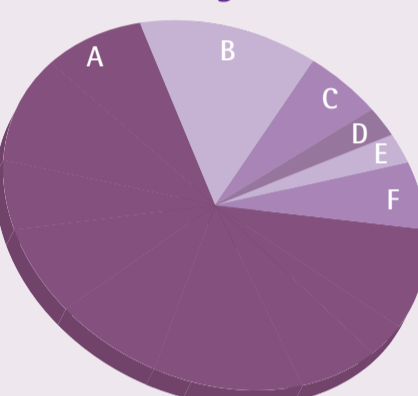
- A) Staff Salaries and Associated costs - £110,752
- B) Accommodation / Office Equipment - £8,678
- C) Partnership budget for PR events - £3,200
- D) Transport - £4,722
- E) Partnership running costs - in kind £6,600

Core Action Projects



- A) AONB Website - £160
- B) Community Involvement & Awareness Events - £2,606
- C) Draft Management Plan - £5,000
- D) AONB Annual Review - £448
- E) Monitoring Projects - £1,975
- F) Planning Support Projects - £5,994
- G) Maximising Income - £3,498
- H) Visitor Survey - £7,714
- I) Business Plan - £1,950
- J) Implement Signs Program - £3,120

AONB Funding



- A) Defra - £125,520
- B) Staffordshire County Council - £20,920
- C) Stafford Borough Council - £8,368
- D) South Staffordshire District Council - £2,092
- E) Lichfield District Council - £2,092
- F) Cannock Chase District Council - £8,368

Joint Committee

Members

Stafford Borough Council – Cllr Frances Beatty MBE – Chairman
Lichfield District Council – Cllr Andrew Smith
Cannock Chase Council – Cllr Carl Bennett
South Staffordshire Council – Cllr Bob McCordle – Vice Chairman
Staffordshire County Council – Cllr Mark Winnington

Advisors

Cannock Chase AONB Officer – Ruth Hjtch
Natural England – Hazel McDowall
Forestry Commission – Jason Maclean
Cannock Chase AONB Advisory Partnership Chairman – June Jukes MBE
Staffordshire County Council, Honorary Secretary – John Rowe
Staffordshire County Council, Honorary Treasurer – John Broad

Officers

Cannock Chase Council – Antony Lancaster
Lichfield District Council – John Smith
South Staffordshire Council – Hayden Baugh Jones
Stafford Borough Council – Naomi Perry/Henry Lewis
Staffordshire County Council – Noreen Moore
Cannock Chase AONB Unit, Clerk to the Committee – Anne Walker

Advisory Partnership

Friends of Cannock Chase – June Jukes MBE – Chairman
Walton Chasers Orienteering Club – Ian Jones – Vice Chairman
British Horse Society – Doug Smith
CEMEX UK Operations Ltd – Shaun Denny
Country Land and Business Association – Donna Tavernor
Dog owners' representative – Claire Leavy
Forestry Commission – Andy Coggins
Hanson Aggregates – David Southgate
National Farmers' Union – Mary Cope
Natural England – Hazel McDowall
Ramblers – Bryan Phillips
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust – Guy Corbett-Marshall
West Midland Bird Club – Frank Gribble MBE/Roger Broadbent
Cycling Representative:
Swinerton Cycles Forest Centre Ltd/MIAS – Mark Swinerton/Paul Massey
Local Business Representative: Silvertrees Holiday Park – Trevor Barber/DMP – Graeme Whitehead
Young People's Representative: Michelle Edwards
Local Authority Representatives:
Cannock Chase Council – Cllr Alan Pearson and Karen Ward
Lichfield District Council – Cllr Gwyneth Boyle and Chris Walsh
South Staffordshire Council – Cllr Len Bates and Hayden Baugh-Jones
Stafford Borough Council – Cllr John Francis and Naomi Perry/Henry Lewis
Staffordshire County Council – Cllr Geoff Martin and Noreen Moore
Parish Councils' Representative – Cllr Steve Welch
Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association – Cllr Pat Ansell and Andrew McRae

Officers Working Group

South Staffordshire Council – Hayden Baugh-Jones – Chairman
Cannock Chase Council – Antony Lancaster – Vice Chairman
Lichfield District Council – John Smith
Stafford Borough Council – Naomi Perry /Henry Lewis
Staffordshire County Council – Noreen Moore
Forestry Commission – Jason Maclean
Natural England – Hazel McDowall

Cannock Chase AONB Unit

AONB Officer - Ruth Hjtch
Assistant AONB Officer - Emma Beaman/Anne Walker
AONB Office Manager - Anne Walker/Denise Watts

Management and Governance

From the Chairman



Frances Beatty

This year once again our volunteers have delivered a tremendous amount of work across Cannock Chase and once again I pay tribute to them.

Mike Goring received his award for Volunteer of the Year 2013 for his stoic opening of the Information Hut at Milford Common in all weathers every Sunday throughout the year, litter picks, keeping the bird feeding stations at the Rifle Range topped up and attending the Staffordshire Ambassador Training, completing the City and Guilds Level 2 Award in Principles of Customer Service in Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism.

Indeed, AONB volunteers have joined in with a range of activities including a signs audit, hosting awareness visits with another AONB and providing visitor information at Milford Common. I would also like to offer thanks for the support from Dicky Bag, Companion Care Vets, South Staffordshire College and Veolia Environmental Services for their staff resources and donations that have enabled us to do so much more for informing people and supporting healthy habitats within the AONB.

Much of the Partnership's work this year has focused on building and shaping our AONB's future. We have consulted widely upon the 2014-19 Management Plan, undertaken a range of regulatory assessments on its proposed shape and worked with government to make sure we meet all our duties. We are also pleased that the AONB has been confirmed as an IUCN Category V site due to our plans for the protection of biodiversity into the future. This success comes about through working in partnership: our shared aim to win out at a landscape scale.

We also began the first phase of addressing a consistent, area-wide approach to visitor management. Our joint vision for this will lead to an action-focused strategy developing next year. It is most important to us that this work involves the widest possible range of people and organisations to make it robust and practical. It is also perhaps the most pressing current piece of work combined for the Joint Committee, the partnership, communities and stakeholders, as the pressures on the Chase from a kaleidoscope of users continues to challenge the balance of use with landscape and environmental protection.

Our visibility in the wider community through our involvement with regional television programmes and BBC's Countryfile, as well as the involvement of Jeanette Brakewell, Staffordshire's world and Olympic winning medalist at eventing, have provided valuable channels for us to remind Staffordshire people and decision makers of the national importance of Cannock Chase.

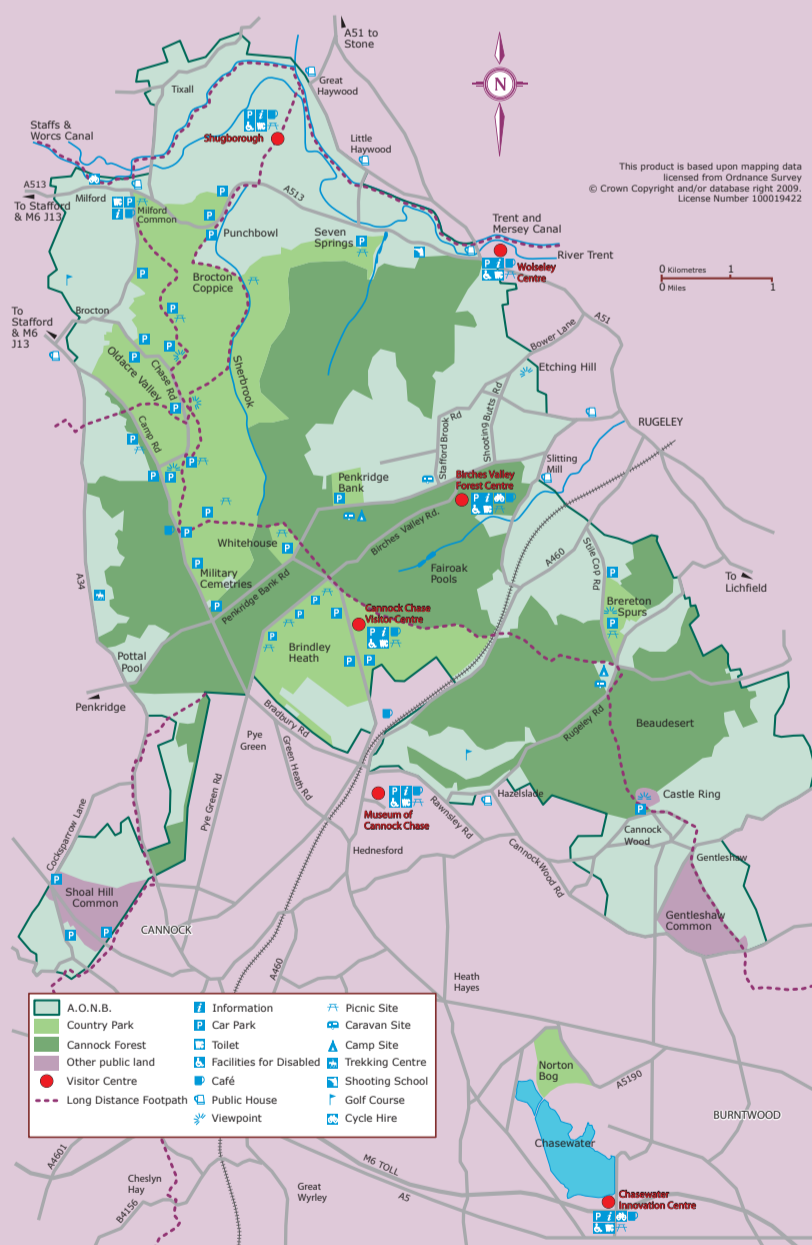
Thinking ahead to next year, I wish Cllr Robert McCordle the very best in his new role as Chairman of the Partnership. I am sure he will enjoy the undoubted challenges as much as I have done.

Cllr Frances Beatty MBE – Chairman of the Joint Committee 2013-14

Planning

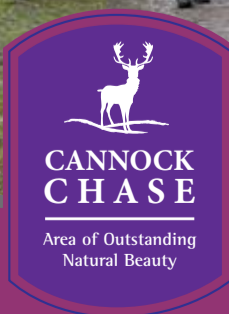
The Partnership works with local planning authorities to ensure that the AONB is recognised and developed appropriately. During the year we retained an expert adviser who worked on commenting on 39 development applications, 8 Local and Neighbourhood Plan issues and 8 other matters. In addition, liaison has continued with Western Power Distribution to pursue the undergrounding of overhead electricity lines where possible.

Cannock Chase Map



Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is supported by:

Defra, Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase Council, Stafford Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire Council, AONB Parish and Town Councils, British Horse Society, Cemex UK Operations Ltd, Country Land and Business Association, Dog Owners Representative (Claire Leavy), Forestry Commission, Friends of Cannock Chase, Hanson Aggregates, National Farmers Union, National Trust, Natural England, Museum of Cannock Chase, Ramblers, CASS Young Carers, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Swinerton Cycles Forest Centre Ltd, Walton Chasers, West Midland Bird Club.



Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Annual Review 2013-14



Cannock Chase AONB Unit

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Web: www.cannockchase.co.uk and <http://aonb-blog.co.uk>

Facebook page : Fredas Footsteps or Cannock Chase AONB

Follow CannockAONB on Twitter

Images courtesy of Dennis Hemmings,
Derrick Forster, Diane Nelson, Dick Turton,
Paul Waterfield, Phil Wilson and Cannock
Chase AONB Unit



Strategy development

Partners completed the review of the 2009-14 Management Plan and drafting of the 2014-19 AONB Management Plan. This included regular checks with English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England that we were meeting our statutory obligations. All Partners have been involved in the drafting.

It was confirmed that the draft meets requirements for the IUCN Category V designation and the European Habitats Directive. The plan was also assessed for appropriateness via equalities and strategic environmental assessments. The Joint Committee approved the plan in December 2013 and Natural England confirmed its acceptability shortly afterwards. The next five years' work is now set.

Work has now begun on the visitor management strategy (VMS). It will draw together individual AONB management measures in a consistent area-wide approach and address the positive and negative impacts of increasing visitor numbers on the principal task of conserving and enhancing the AONB. The strategy will provide a set of key visitor management options to work towards in the future,

through agreed action plans. The VMS will also incorporate any separate plans for the mitigation of visitor impacts on the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation.

Two stakeholder workshops have been held involving participants from local businesses, parish councils, fire brigade, police and community individuals. An on-line survey has also been completed. A VMS vision statement and high level objectives have been approved. Next year work will continue to draw up a strategy and action plans.



Future proofing the AONB



Raising Awareness

Whilst substantial effort has been put into getting our future secured through drafting the Management Plan and preparing for a visitor management strategy, much focus has also been placed on informing our communities about the AONB to help protect it.

Jeanette Brakewell, a local eventer who has won medals for the country at the World Equestrian Games, European team and Olympic events launched our new Horse Sense leaflet at South Staffordshire College. It targets owners and riders of horses in the area. The launch attracted BBC Midlands Today coverage, stimulating much positive debate about the right things for horse riders to do in the AONB. The advice has been developed based on a recent horiculture condition assessment.

Dog walkers are a substantial part of regular visitors to the AONB. In response to some issues raised about the Seven Springs site a "pop-up" advice post was set up and sponsored by Dicky Bag and K9 Training Services. Partners drawn from the Advisory Partnership and the rangers teams came together to talk about conflict between cyclists and walkers, dog mess and comfortable control of dogs for all AONB users. Offers on Dicky Bags, microchipping of dogs and training advice were available. Rangers report the event subsequently produced a noticeable reduction in littering at that site.

Taster sessions were provided at Birches Valley Forest Centre to allow dog owners the experience of handling their dogs outside in the AONB environment. The scheme was sponsored by Companion Care Vets, allowing additional sessions to be offered. It also attracted coverage on BBC's Countryfile in November (viewing figures of 8.6 million).

Other events included a walk focussed on the history of Shugborough Hall and a bluebell walk. Our AONB also had an exchange visit with Nordic Walkers from our fellow AONB, Clwydian Range and Dee Valley. 50 Nordic Walkers joined 11 of our volunteers on a choice of 2 mile or 6 mile walks from Milford Common. On the return visit to Loggerheads Country Park in Denbighshire, we had a slightly hillier walk! In October, the Forestry Commission led a walk to explain about management of deer with 34 attendees.

Through these events we have reached a minimum of 400 people excluding all other media activity.



Moving forward on projects

Sustainable Development Fund 2013-14

Between 2013 -2014 the Sustainable Development Fund supported 11 projects totalling £22,169.60. The total match funding generated from these projects was £59,695.47.

In total:

- 5 projects directly involved volunteers
- An outdoor kitchen facility installed at Beaudesert Scout and Guide Camp
- A new toposcope at Shoal Hill Common with an accompanying leaflet about the site
- 8 new wildlife sculptures erected at the Wildlife Trust
- A new interpretation board at Nine Gates Car park and a bench to bench project to aid recovering stroke patients
- £5,000 in sponsorship received to match fund a project by the Co-operative

Project Title	Project Lead	Final Outturn 2013/14 £
Echoes in the Landscape	Museum of Cannock Chase	£500
Boney Hay Gateway project	Forest of Mercia	£2,500
Bird Feeding Station	Bache Mcshane Ringing group	£950
Art on the Wildside	Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	£6,000
Shoal Hill Volunteer project	Shoal Hill Joint Committee	£454
Apps in the Landscape	Museum of Cannock Chase	£5,000
Bench 2 Bench project	Staffordshire County Council	£1,266
Shoal Hill Toposcope	Shoal Hill Joint Committee	£960
Felling to Forest	Beaudesert Trust	£4,000
Volunteering on Cannock Chase	Friends of Cannock Chase	£500

Community Work

More than 150 people have taken part in events during the year focused on awareness and practical tasks in the AONB. This equates to around 70 days of work donated to the AONB.

Action – Two litter picking sessions were held, 2 sessions removing invasive species (Himalayan balsam and Willowherb) and 21 sessions of heathland and woodland management. A willow weaving event was also held with 15 volunteers learning techniques using woodland products.

Informing – Volunteers supported the filming for pieces in the BBC's Midlands Today and Countryfile over a period of three days. Their work on fixed point photography has expanded to enable images to be published in the 2014-19 Management Plan.

Monitoring – Over 20 volunteers continue to take photographs for our landscape monitoring project of fixed point photography. This is our 9th year of monitoring and work was featured on the Countryfile programme.

Working with the Forest of Mercia Project Team, a survey of the condition of signs and waymarkers and their position began, starting with the Heart of England Way.

Volunteers have also completed the Veteran and Notable Trees survey at Shugborough. The survey included the exact location of each tree, its condition and a photo to identify it. The next stage is to look at similar trees in the wider AONB area, but to include tree health in conjunction with the OPAL scheme.

Helping Visitors – Volunteers extended the amount of time the Information Hut at Milford Common was open between Easter and October. It was also opened every day during the February half term week along with family activities. The hut continues to be opened every Sunday even through the winter by two of our volunteers.

The annual **Armistice Day ceremony** for service and support animals was held at Freda's Grave. It was again led by Rev Jane Nash, with a reading from Warrant Officer Greg Hedges, who was accompanied by Watchman V, the mascot of the Mercian Regiment. Around 40 people and 35 dogs remembered the work of animals in wartime and current day service dogs. Wreaths were laid on behalf of South Staffordshire Council, Friends of Cannock Chase, Pets as Therapy and other individuals. Support dogs also attended with members of the public.



Continuing support by our local community