

DRAFT 1 The Appropriate Assessment (AA) of Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2009 - 2014

Section 1 – Introduction

Introduction

The EU Natura 2000 network provides ecological infrastructure for the protection of sites which are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered or vulnerable natural habitats and species within the European Community. These sites which are also referred to as European sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Offshore Marine Site (OMS) (this is not applicable in Cannock Chase AONB). Ramsar sites (Internationally Important Wetlands) are treated as if they were European sites in accordance with the Government's policy statement of November 2000 and the DEFRA circular 01/2005 (paragraph 5). The European sites in Cannock Chase AONB (or close to its boundary) are:

- Cannock Chase SAC
- Chartley Moss SAC
- Pasturefields Salt Marsh SAC
- Motte Meadows SAC
- Aqualate Mere Ramsar Site

Cannock Chase SAC

This document, relates to the 5 sites listed above. The main site within the AONB is Cannock Chase SAC (full description below). It lies both within Stafford Borough and Cannock Chase District. The purpose of a Habitats Regulations Assessment is to assess the impacts of land-use plans and projects against the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site and to ascertain whether there will be an adverse affect on the integrity of the site. If significant effects are identified by the assessment, alternative plan options need to be examined.

Description of the Site	
Name	Cannock Chase SAC
Date of designation	April 2005
Site Description	<p>The site comprises of lowland heathland and is the most extensive in the Midlands region.</p> <p>Character of the vegetation is intermediate between the upland and northern heaths of England and Wales and those of the southern counties.</p> <p>The heathland includes species of cowberry (<i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i>) and crowberry (<i>Empetrum nigrum</i>), alongside being home to the main British population of the hybrid bilberry (<i>Vaccinium intermedium</i>), a plant of restricted occurrence.</p> <p>The site has important populations of butterflies and beetles, European nightjar (<i>caprimulgus europaeus</i>) and five species of bats.</p>
Site condition	2.27% Favourable 95.29% Unfavourable recovering 2.45% Unfavourable no change
Reason for European Designation	European dry heaths Annex 1 habitat for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.
Qualifying Features	Northern Atlantic wet heaths Annex 1 habitat present as a qualifying feature, but not primary reason for site selection
Key Environmental features that support site integrity	Sympathetic management of heathland vegetation Climate Maintenance of soil chemistry Maintenance of hydrology Water chemistry
Distance from Stafford BC Boundary	Approximately two thirds of the SAC lies within Stafford Borough boundary and one third lies within Cannock Chase District boundary.
Size	1,271.78 ha of which 886.81 ha is within Stafford Borough

General site character	<p>Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (0.5%)</p> <p>Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (76.3%)</p> <p>Coniferous woodland (12%)</p> <p>Non-Forest areas cultivated with woody plants (including orchards, groves, vineyards, (10.5%)</p> <p>Other land (including towns, villages, roads, waste places, mines, industrial sites) (0.7%)</p>
Site Objectives	<p>The Conservation Objectives for this site are to maintain the following habitats and geological features in favourable condition, with particular reference to any development component special interest features for which the land is designated as individually listed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dwarf shrub heath • Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland <p>On this site favourable condition requires the maintenance of the extent of each designated habitat type. Maintenance implies restoration if evidence from condition assessment suggests a reduction in extent.</p> <p>To maintain the dwarf shrub heath habitats at Cannock Chase SSSI in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features.</p>
Site Vulnerability/ Issues	<p>Due to much of Cannock Chase being popular and well-used as a Country Park there are many threats to track creation and vegetation damage from visitors including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog walking • horse riding • mountain biking • Off-track activities such as orienteering • Car parking <p>Other threats include the invasion of other plant species including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bracken invasion • Birch and pine scrub <p>Loss of heathland to fragmentation and scrub/woodland encroachment</p> <p>The land is registered as Common Land which poses a</p>

	<p>threat to the site as the Secretary of State must give approval before fencing can take place, this means that the reintroduction of sustainable management in the form of livestock grazing has many problems.</p> <p>Although mining in the area has ceased the site overlies coal measures which have been deep mined, resulting in fissures across the site. This is a threat to the hydrology of the site.</p> <p>Furthermore the underlying Sherwood Sandstone is a major aquifer with water abstracted for public and industrial uses and the effects of this on the wetland features of the Chase are not fully understood. Major increase in its use would obviously impact significantly on the site.</p> <p>The prime air pollution concerns for heathlands and sub-artic scrub habitats in the UK are nitrogen deposition and ozone. Acid deposition may also be substantial, with implications for catchment water quality.</p>
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“The purpose of Appropriate Assessment (AA) of land use plans is to ensure that protection of the integrity of European sites is a part of the planning process at a regional and local level. The requirement for AA of plans or projects is outlined in Article 6(3) and (4) of the European Communities (1992) Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (“Habitats Directive”).”

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC’s): are strictly protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive. Article 3 of the Habitats Directive requires the establishment of a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitat types and 788 species identified in Annexes I and II of the Directive. The listed habitat types and species are those considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level (excluding birds).

Natural England have produced guidance on when an AA should be undertaken; this is in the form of a flow chart appended to the Habitat Regulations Note No. 3. In brief, this chart sets out how to determine if an operation, project or plan is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. The key question asks whether or not the qualifying feature whether it be species or habitat is likely to be directly affected, and then sets

out the stages of consideration and analysis to determine the necessity of an Appropriate Assessment.

Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2015 is likely to have a significant effect on the various species and habitats that qualify the sites set out as Natura 2000 sites because it has the stated aim of, amongst other things, creating a vision for wildlife and supporting the Biodiversity Action Plan and other 'environmentally' groups within the AONB. The anticipated outcomes as set out in the screening report will, it is anticipated, have a long term positive significant impact.

An Appropriate Assessment Scoping of the AONB Management Plan is therefore necessary.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment

A Habitats Regulations Assessment is the requirement that Local Authorities and Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) should consider whether projects or plans, as part of land use planning documents, will have adverse effects on Natura 2000 Sites (also known as European Sites). Natura 2000 Sites are nature conservation sites designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and includes species outlined in Regulation 10 of the Habitats Regulations 1994.

This requirement was brought about by the United Kingdom's failure to implement Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the European Directive regarding Habitats (92/43/EEC) and enforced through the European Court of Justice (ECJ). The Court ruled that UK law did not adequately transfer the Directive into British legislation.

Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9): 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' states that RAMSAR sites should receive the same protection as SPAs and SACs.

2.1. Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan

The full description of area, vision, issues, aims, outcomes, objectives and detailed maps and plans are set out in the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2009.

In Section 2, the landscape character of the AONB, its special qualities and how people interact with it are set out. Linked to these are a series of key issues (KIs). The KIs also link directly to the High Level Objectives. They set out "*what we have*" and "*factors affecting us getting what we want*".

Section 3 addresses AONB management and breaks the task into five themed areas of work. It sets out the Management Plan Policies. This is "*how we must work to get what we want*". It is also a formal statement of the Partnership's strategic position for delivery.

Sections 4 addresses the delivery of AONB management. It sets out the Actions we must take and how they will be monitored. This is "*what we must do*" and "*how we will measure the impact of our actions*".

2.2. The Effects of the Plan

Due to the clearly stated aims and objectives of the AONB Management Plan to conserve and enhance the distinctive Cannock Chase AONB landscape of local, national and international importance for its biodiversity. **I**t is anticipated that there will be minimal negative impacts on any qualifying feature of any Natura 2000 site. It is possible that in the future increasing demand for recreation and housing could create conflict between the needs of the people and the needs of the environment. Mitigation measures need to be put in place to ensure the latter is managed appropriately to reduce its negative effect.

2.3 Methodology

EC guidance and the recent publication from DCLG titled *Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment* agree the following stages or tasks: -

Stage one: Likely Significant Effects (Screening)

Stage two: Appropriate Assessment and ascertaining on the site integrity

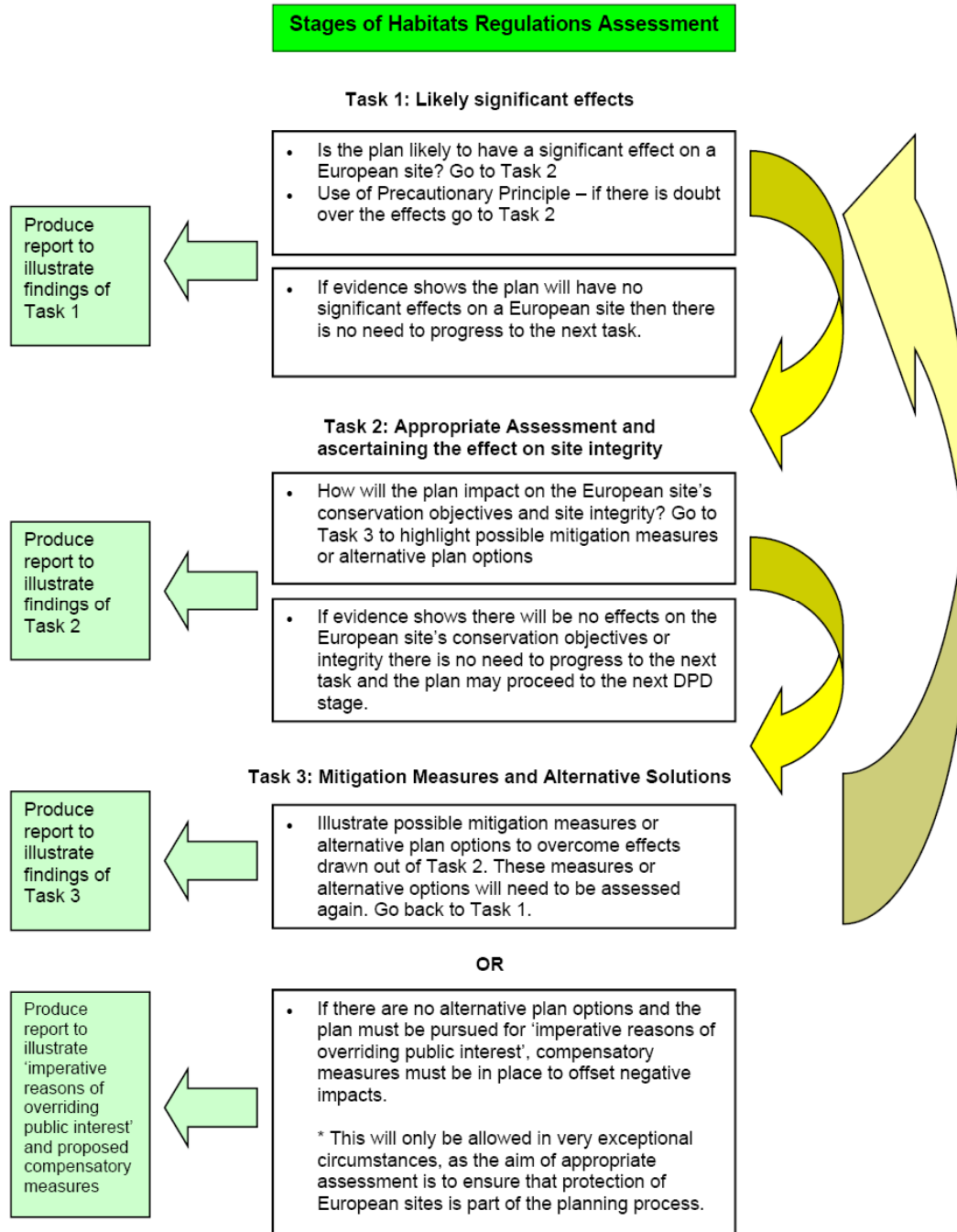
Stage three: Mitigation and alternative solutions and

* Imperative reasons of overriding public interest

2.4. Mitigation

The higher level objectives (HLO's) of the CCAONB Plan together with statutory duties incumbent upon the AONB means that all plans, projects or proposals that could conceivably have a negative impact upon Natura 2000 sites and their qualifying features will have mitigation factors rigorously set out and agreed prior to approval. For example, the possible negative impact of increased visitors will be mitigated for by education of the visiting public to remain on designated tracks, and by directing them to 'honey pot' areas that are able to take the visitor pressure. Hence, reducing the negative impact on the more sensitive areas, namely the lowland heathland.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process



KEY

CODE:	
NLSE	No Likely Significant Effect(s)
LSE	Likely Significant Effect(s) – A likely significant effect on the site’s conservation objectives requiring modification or dropping of the Objective
U	Uncertain - cannot determine if NLSE or LSE (see above) so <u>may</u> require modification or dropping of the Objective

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	CANNOCK CHASE SAC	PASTURE FIELDS SALT MARSH SAC	CHARTLEY MOSS SAC	MOTTEY MEADOWS SAC	AQUALATE MERE RAMSAR SITE
	SAC CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES				
<p>CANNOCK CHASE AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN</p> <p><i>Objectives, policies and actions.</i></p>	<p>European dry heaths, intermediate between uplands of northern England and Wales and those of southern counties North Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i></p>	<p>Inland salt meadows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for which this is the only known outstanding locality in the United Kingdom. • which is considered to be rare as its total extent in the United Kingdom is estimated to be less than 10 hectares 	<p>Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds, for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Transition mires and quaking bogs, for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom</p> <p>Bog woodland</p>	<p>Lowland hay meadows, for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK</p>	<p>The site comprises a diverse range of habitats from open water to raised bog</p> <p>Supports a number of rare species of plants associated with wetlands including 5 nationally scarce species together with rare wetland invertebrates</p>

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	CANNOCK CHASE SAC	PASTURE FIELDS SALT MARSH SAC	CHARTLEY MOSS SAC	MOTTEY MEADOWS SAC	AQUALATE MERE RAMSAR SITE
LANDSCAPE					
<p>HLO 1 Develop the sense of Cannock Chase AONB as a special place for everyone who lives in, works within or visits the area.</p> <p>HLO 2 Conserve and enhance the distinctive Cannock Chase AONB landscape of local, national and international importance for its biodiversity.</p>	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
LP1 The Partnership will ensure consistency in management and operational plans relating to the AONB's diverse landscapes.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
LP2 The practical management and restoration of heathlands will be a priority within the Partnership's delivery of the Management Plan.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	CANNOCK CHASE SAC	PASTURE FIELDS SALT MARSH SAC	CHARTLEY MOSS SAC	MOTTEY MEADOWS SAC	AQUALATE MERE RAMSAR SITE
LP3 Sustainable woodland management will be a priority within the delivery of the Management Plan.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
LP4 The Partnership will address the impact of horsiculture with land and horse owners	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
LP5 Mechanisms will be sought to identify and encourage sustainable agricultural land management practices	NLSE as long as it is sympathetic agricultural management	NLSE as long as it is sympathetic agricultural management	NLSE as long as it is sympathetic agricultural management	NLSE as long as it is sympathetic agricultural management	NLSE as long as it is sympathetic agricultural management
LP6 Parklands will be conserved and enhanced	NLSE as long as it doesn't encourage increased visitors	NLSE as long as it doesn't encourage increased visitors	NLSE as long as it doesn't encourage increased visitors	NLSE as long as it doesn't encourage increased visitors	NLSE as long as it doesn't encourage increased visitors
LP7 Significant archaeological, geological and historical landscapes and their settings will be identified, protected and managed.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
LP8 The maintenance and improvement of water levels and quality will be promoted.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	CANNOCK CHASE SAC	PASTURE FIELDS SALT MARSH SAC	CHARTLEY MOSS SAC	MOTTEY MEADOWS SAC	AQUALATE MERE RAMSAR SITE
LP9 Only development that acknowledges and respects the special qualities of the AONB will be supported.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
LP10 New activity by extractive industries will be resisted.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
LP11 The long-term health of Cannock Chase's wildlife population will be maintained.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
LP12 The landscape's wilderness and open qualities will be protected for people to enjoy.	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area
LP13 The distinctive landscape character of the AONB will be conserved and enhanced.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	CANNOCK CHASE SAC	PASTURE FIELDS SALT MARSH SAC	CHARTLEY MOSS SAC	MOTTEY MEADOWS SAC	AQUALATE MERE RAMSAR SITE
PEOPLE					
<p>HLO 3 Develop a place valued and understood by everyone who comes into contact with Cannock Chase AONB, so that they can contribute positively to the shaping of its future.</p> <p>HLO 4 Ensure a high and sustainable quality of life is offered by a safe, clean and tranquil environment</p>	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the Chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area
<p>PP1 The importance of the AONB will be communicated clearly and consistently to foster a greater appreciation and respect for the designation.</p>	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	CANNOCK CHASE SAC	PASTURE FIELDS SALT MARSH SAC	CHARTLEY MOSS SAC	MOTTEY MEADOWS SAC	AQUALATE MERE RAMSAR SITE
PP2 Co-ordinated, high quality information, interpretation and educational material will be provided and available to everyone about Cannock Chase AONB to support sustainable visitor management.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
PP3 Centres of excellence will be created at the network of local AONB visitor centres to explain the importance of Cannock Chase AONB.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
PP4 Communities, visitors and businesses will be engaged actively.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
PP5 The Partnership will seek to influence those who control highways and traffic issues to ensure solutions appropriate to the AONB.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

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ECONOMY					
HLO 5 Maintain a working landscape where prosperity and opportunity increase while natural life flourishes and pressure upon natural resources diminish.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
EP1 Prosperous and sustainable land management practices will be promoted as part of a living and working countryside.	NLSE as long as it is sympathetic agricultural management	NLSE as long as it is sympathetic agricultural management	NLSE as long as it is sympathetic agricultural management	NLSE as long as it is sympathetic agricultural management	NLSE as long as it is sympathetic agricultural management
EP2 The development of new local businesses complementary to AONB aims will be encouraged.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
EP3 Businesses will be encouraged to become actively involved in the delivery of the Management Plan.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

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EP4 The purchase and use of local products will be encouraged.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
EP5 Sustainable, quality tourism will be promoted.	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area	NLSE as long as visitor numbers don't increase and have a negative impact on the area
EP6 Where development does take place, it will be ensured that it contributes to the quality of the AONB.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	CANNOCK CHASE SAC	PASTURE FIELDS SALT MARSH SAC	CHARTLEY MOSS SAC	MOTTEY MEADOWS SAC	AQUALATE MERE RAMSAR SITE
RECREATION					
HLO 6 Create a place of enjoyment for everyone, providing opportunities for quiet recreation that contributes positively to physical and mental well being.	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation
RP1 Recreation activities will be encouraged, through positive management, towards areas that are the least vulnerable and capable of absorbing impacts.	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation
RP2 Areas of peace and tranquility will be protected.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
RP3 A welcoming, informative culture will be developed for visitors.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

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RP4 The Partnership will work closely with those engaged in the preparation and implementation of sustainable tourism strategies.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
RP5 Visitor use of the AONB will be assisted through the improvement of access networks to minimise degradation of sensitive areas.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
RP6 Visitors will be encouraged to take healthy activity.	NLSE as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	nlse as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	nlse as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	nlse as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	nlse as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation
RP7 Visitors will be encouraged to visit other areas nearby but outside the AONB boundary.	NLSE	nlse as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	nlse as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	nlse as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation	nlse as long as increased visitors and recreational use of the chase does not result in erosion and trampling of vegetation

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RP8 Respect for all those using the area will be improved through provision of information and education.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
RP9 Clear signage and all types of interpretation appropriate to the character of the AONB will be developed and installed to support sustainable visitor management and the protection of the visual amenity of the area.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
RP10 Provision of new or the expansion of existing recreation activities will only be supported where they are sustainable and benefits to the AONB can be identified.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
RP11 Where development does take place, mitigation will be sought to protect the AONB.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

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SUPPORT					
HLO 7 Maintain and develop a successful partnership working together to manage Cannock Chase AONB effectively.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
HP1 The formal Partnership will be maintained and work with others to deliver the Management Plan.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
HP2 Activity will be co-ordinated across the AONB Partnership.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
HP3 The Partnership will ensure organisations fulfil their statutory duties towards the AONB.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
HP4 The Partnership will work to influence others to adopt policy and strategy to ensure the AONB is placed at the heart of decision-making.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

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HP5 Work will be undertaken with national and international protected landscape communities to ensure best practice.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
HP6 Partners will aim to reach consensus on how to accommodate regional and local planning requirements.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
HP7 The condition of the AONB will be monitored and progress reported.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
HP8 Sustainable practices will be encouraged in the operational work of the AONB Partnership.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE
HP9 Land management strategies will provide for adaptation to climate change and avoid contributing to its increased impact, whilst maintaining the integrity of the AONB.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	CANNOCK CHASE SAC	PASTURE FIELDS SALT MARSH SAC	CHARTLEY MOSS SAC	MOTTEY MEADOWS SAC	AQUALATE MERE RAMSAR SITE
HP10 Sustainable levels of human and financial resource will be generated and maintained to deliver the Management Plan efficiently.	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE	NLSE

NOTE: SHADED CELLS indicate themes. For ease of delivery, the Partnership has split its work into five themes. Each of the five themes relates back to the High Level Objectives (HLO's) listed below the theme. Much of the content could be classified in a number of the themes but each only appears once within the Management Plan.

3. Analysis of the matrix

3.1 From the matrix it is identified that no HLO's and policies set out in Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan have a negative effect on any of the Natura 2000 sites.

3.2. In combination effects

The AONB plan seeks to formulate local authority policy for managing the AONB. There is no executive power in the AONB designation or Management Plan and any actions undertaken are enacted under other powers and permissions. Any other relevant plans and strategies that might initiate action that could have a significant impact on Natura 2000 sites will also be subject to the need for scoping under the Habitats Regulations. Therefore it is not possible to see any situations when there would be in combination effects that are created through the AONB Management Plan.

Conclusions

This scoping report has identified that there are no likely significant negative effects on the Natura 2000 sites from the HLO's and policies set out in the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2009. However, within the matrix there are a number of policies that could potentially increase visitor use and erosion of certain. Visitor use will therefore be monitored along with erosion and if the latter does occur mitigation measures will be put into effect to reduce the negative impact.