

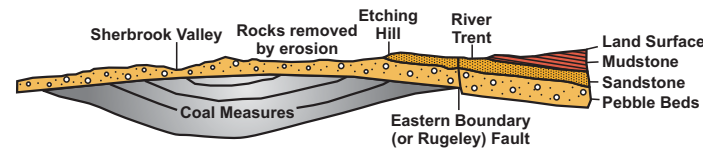
Protecting nature's building blocks

the importance of RIGS in Cannock Chase AONB.

There is one aspect of Cannock Chase AONB that is often overlooked, we can see the open heathland and woodland but rarely do we consider why it appears where it does. This is where the importance of geology and geomorphology comes in to play. Different soil types in an area can often be seen through the ways in which different plants favour certain regions. Local characteristics of geology have led to the designation of Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS for short). RIGS can range from small outcrops of locally significant rocks such as pebble beds showing how sand and gravel deposits were laid down millions of years ago, to large scale features associated with glaciation or the action of rivers.

A mixture of different rock types and geomorphological features can give rise to a variety of interesting landscapes. Cannock Chase AONB contains several different RIGS, for example, Etching Hill, Brocton Gravel Pit and Satnall Hills Quarry. The relationship between geodiversity and biodiversity is important. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust developed a Biodiversity Action Plan (the SBAP)

some time ago, but only recently has work started on producing a Staffordshire Geodiversity Action Plan (SGAP) to promote the values of the varied geology and geomorphology of the county. It is also about the landscapes we see in places like the Cannock Chase AONB and the natural features, such as rock outcrops and heathland, that make them such interesting and pleasant places.



The Staffordshire Geodiversity Action Plan covers all of the RIGS on Cannock Chase and many more across the county. The importance of what they represent is carried forward to schools and community groups, County planners and industry, so that our earth heritage can be protected and in turn the building blocks of AONBs can remain to support the natural environment.

For further information please contact:
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Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is supported by the Countryside Agency, Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase Council, Stafford Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire Council, British Horse Society, Community Council of Staffordshire, Country Land and Business Association, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, English Nature, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Forestry Commission, Friends of Cannock Chase, National Farmers Union, Ramblers Association, Sport England, Staffordshire Parish Councils Association, West Midland Bird Club



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AONB NEWS

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Newsletter 3

New Cycle Centre



Conference delegates visit the new Cycle Centre

The new cycle centre at Birches Valley Forest Centre opened on 24th May. Phase 1 of the specialised cycle routes is aimed at sports cyclists and families and has made good progress thanks to the development of the Chase Trails volunteer group. Phase 1 is concentrated in Fairoak Valley, close to the cycle centre, so that visitors have facilities available and so cyclists can start to be drawn away from the more sensitive parts of the Chase. A phased approach has been adopted so that skills and techniques in trail construction can be tested and costed accurately. These initial routes are being monitored so any concerns can be addressed and the success of the concept measured before discussions concerning its expansion to the wider Chase area are undertaken.

For further details please contact: **Jason MacLean on 01889 586593.**

First Local AONB Conference

In June 2003, around 80 delegates came along to the first Cannock Chase AONB Annual Conference, held in Rugeley. After being updated with goings on within the AONB delegates were then shown a preview of the new Cut to the Chase video (see later). There were then workshops giving a flavour of the new Draft Management Plan policies and creating an awareness of the opportunity to comment on the Plan before the end of September 2003.

Lunch was of locally produced and sourced foods after which there was a short guided coach tour of the Chase taking in a lot of the issues facing the AONB. Delegates arrived at Birches Valley Forest Centre for either a walk or ride along some of the new cycle trails created on Forestry Commission land.



Delegates at Birches Valley Forest Centre

Chase Press Packers



Around 200 children from the Cannock area have been extremely busy this summer producing their own newspaper front pages about Cannock Chase AONB, with help from Cannock Chase AONB Unit, Cannock Chase Council and Staffordshire County Council Ranger Service.

Children from Etching Hill, Gorsemoor and Redhill primary schools, as well as Cannock Chase Council summer playscheme, visited Marquis Drive to find out more about the AONB and experience the area for themselves. Through a series of games and activities they learnt about the need to conserve and enhance the AONB. They took photographs of the area, interviewed countryside staff about their work and used role play, writing and artistic skills to produce newspaper front pages about their visit.

Chase Press Packers helped to raise awareness about the new Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan that's being produced. "Hot off the presses", children took copies of their completed front pages home with them and the originals were exhibited at Cannock library alongside the Cannock Chase AONB display - giving details on how to comment on the Draft Management Plan.

This has been a very successful and rewarding project for all those involved and a big thank you and congratulations to everyone for the wonderful work produced.

Fun in the Forest

On a scorching Sunday the 13th of July about 4000 people helped make the 2003 forest fair a huge success. The AONB partner organisations worked closely together to stage the event at the Birches Valley Forest Centre. Among the attractions that people came to see were:

- A band of welsh axe throwers
- Modern forestry machines harvesting and loading timber
- Horses extracting timber
- Birds of prey
- Chainsaw sculpting
- Tree surgeons felling a tree from the top down!
- Yurt making, which as I discovered is nothing to do with small pots of yoghurt!
- And for kids of all ages and chances to play drums in the African style and to climb a tree with all the rope and harnesses that tree surgeons use.

But people had not just come to a good time just about everyone took the opportunity to comment on the future of Cannock Chase with the AONB unit.



One of the popular attractions was the coracle maker but I think that had more to do with the chance to fall into the temporary pond as you paddled your coracle. It was about the only way to cool off.

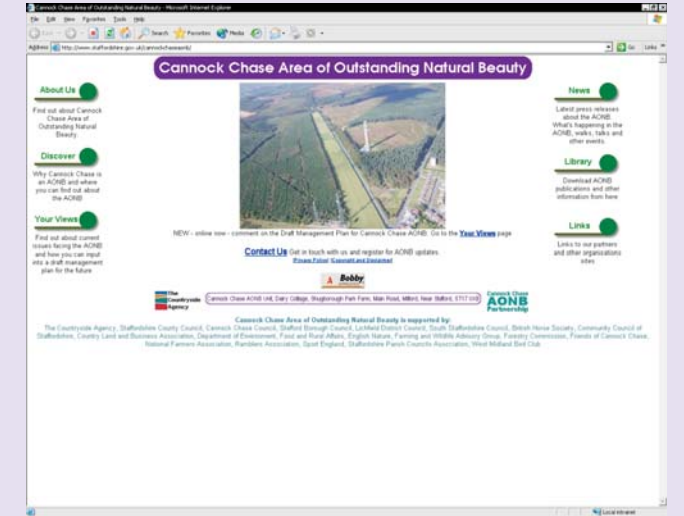
A lasting memory for me will be the almost surreal finale of the day, which saw (heard) the African drummers jamming with the green man on his English Bagpipes playing a 13th Century French Song.

Dan Saberton, who coordinated the event, left the countryside service shortly after this event but what a way to go!

Cannock Chase AONB Website

There is now an AONB website available providing information about the landscape, wildlife, history and management of the Chase. Users can see the wealth of community involvement and consultation that has taken place on Cannock Chase AONB to date and are encouraged to have their say on the Draft Management Plan on line. The site is still in its infancy and we'd like to hear your ideas and comments on its content. There's also a series of links to partner organisations websites so why not check it out to find out more. The site can be visited at:

www.cannockchaseaonb.org.uk

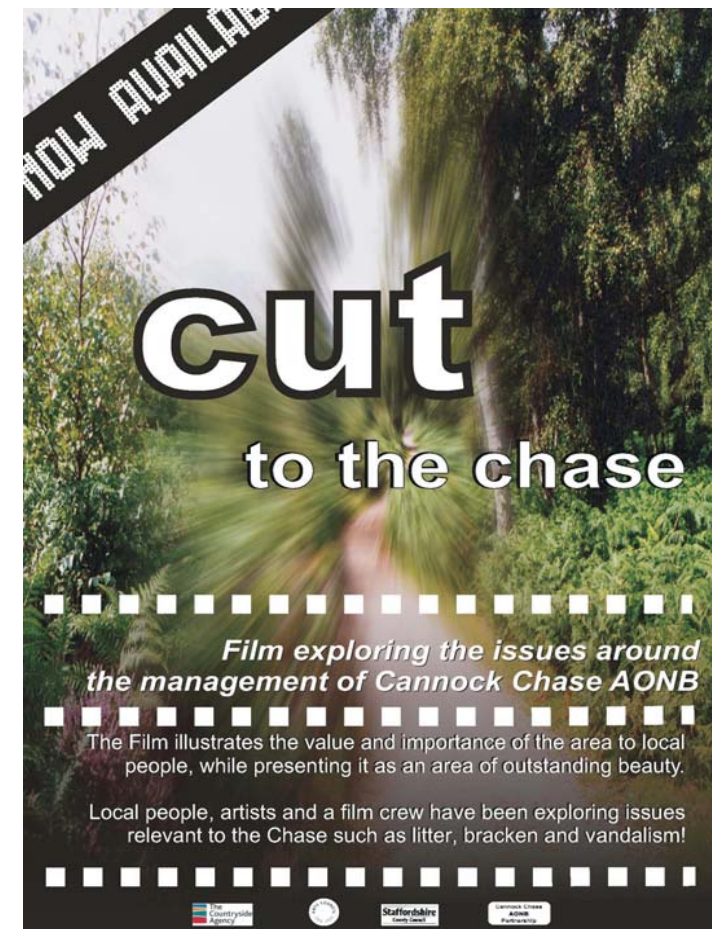


Cut to the Chase

Over 9 months, this project involved local people, artists and a film crew exploring and documenting issues relevant to Cannock Chase AONB. An animator worked with young people, a creative writer was in residence in local libraries offering people the chance to create short poems and local people were given the opportunity to voice their opinions in a way that is more fulfilling than simply completing a questionnaire.

The resulting video is to be used to help with the consultation process on the new Draft Management Plan for Cannock Chase AONB. It can be seen at Marquis Drive Visitor Centre and borrowed from Cannock, Stafford, Rugeley and Lichfield libraries as well as the mobile libraries. Alternatively, a limited supply of copies are available from Paul Challacombe, Arts Development Assistant on 01889 881388.

This initiative was commissioned by Cannock Chase AONB Unit, Staffordshire Arts and Museums Service, the Countryside Agency and Arts Council West Midlands.



Chase Heritage Trail

The Chase Heritage Trail is a proposed long distance cycle path/footway which will link the town centres of Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley to local heritage sites, including the Museum of Cannock Chase, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Cannock Chase Country Park and the existing Forest Enterprise trails.

Cannock Chase Council submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2001 for resources to

establish the Trail. At the end of 2002, the Council was advised that it had been awarded a Stage 1 pass of up to £566,000, together with an award of development funding of £16,500. Consequently, the Council has agreed to the development of the project to full bid stage and specialist professional advisers have been engaged to help. Consultations on the route are currently under way and the project development will be completed by the end of 2003.

For further details, please contact:
Gill Taylor on 01543 464463.