

AONB NEWS

Summer 2009

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Dogs took the lead at Cannock Chase canine fun day



Sara Green, Project Officer, Community Involvement Programme for Cannock Chase AONB, said: "Our canine fun day was a fantastic opportunity for dogs and owners alike to come and have fun. We had lots of displays, competitions and events on the day, as well as plenty of educational advice about walking your dog on Cannock Chase."



Hundreds of dog owners from across Staffordshire and their four-legged friends turned out to the 'Dog Activity Day' on the Forestry Commission estate at Cannock Chase Forest, near Rugeley, on Saturday the 9th May.

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership teamed up with the Forestry Commission to stage the action packed event at the Birches Valley Forest Centre, which included displays from Staffordshire Dog Display Team and the Staffs Agility School, who also ran a 'have a go' session at the agility tasks for owners and their dogs. New for this year were 'Flyball', 'Heelwork to Music' and a gundog scurry.

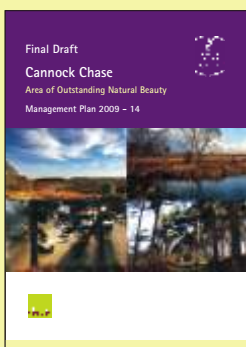
The fun pet show, with classes such as 'Best Young Handler' and 'Best Veteran Handler', was judged by Steve Jenkinson, a regular columnist for Your Dog magazine.

Other highlights included:

- K9 Club held a problem corner for people who had trouble training their dogs;
- Donnachie & Townley Vets held a workshop on healthy dogs;
- Kennel Club Advisor;
- Border Collie Trust;
- Guide Dogs for the Blind and Hearing Dogs for the Deaf;
- Cannock Sled Dog Group;
- Greyhound Rescue who re-homed 2 dogs on the day!
- not forgetting food outlets, traders and of course the Sea Scouts!

The event was kindly sponsored by Arden Grange, who supplied goody bags and competition prizes.

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-14



We're pleased to announce that the next 5 year Management Plan has been approved and published. The Joint Committee approved the draft to be put forward to Andrew Wood from Natural England. He identified a number of key points that demonstrate good practice including:

'The depth of the consultation with representatives from the AONB Partnership and

other organisations (and it) is flexible enough to be able to respond to new issues and opportunities as they arise.'

The new Management Plan has been lodged with the Secretary of State and is available as a pdf on the AONB website or printed copies are available on request.



Bluebell Walk

Now here's a good idea for an awareness event! Take a group of interested community members, a couple of AONB staff and the Chairman of Beaudesert Trust, who has a wealth of knowledge about the Beaudesert Scout & Guide Camp, and plan an event in May to view carpets of bluebells under the woodland canopy. Sounds great, but someone forgot to book the good weather!

After many phone calls from concerned potential visitors, worried that the bluebells would be finished or in poor condition so late in the growing season, when all other bluebells had been and gone, around 30 hardy souls in wet weather gear arrived on the car park. The mood was lifted of course at the sight of the wonderful display, which is always much later due to being more sheltered under the trees. The cameras came out, the pictures were taken and Mike Street gave the visitors an extended tour of the site to include the ruins of the old hall and the rabbit tree - I can't tell you about it, said too much already!

The site is not generally open to the public, but on occasions, special visits are arranged, or you could join the Friends of Beaudesert as many of the visitors on the bluebell walk did. Contact Beaudesert for more details on 01543 682278, email info@beaudesert.org or see their website at www.beaudesert.org.

Andy Wilson Visit

Natural England Board Member, Andy Wilson, made a visit to Cannock Chase on 23rd June to take a look at what an AONB team does. Andy was appointed in January this year and is responsible for the West Midlands area. His 'day job' is Chief Executive of the North York Moors National Park.



© Natural England

He spent the day on site visits and meeting members of the Partnership, many of them Partnership 'multi-taskers' such as the Fixed Point Photographers, Friends of Cannock Chase, Walton Chasers and parish council representatives.

The visit was part of a year of 'Diamonds in the Landscape' celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the Act of Legislation creating the National Parks and AONBs (The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949).



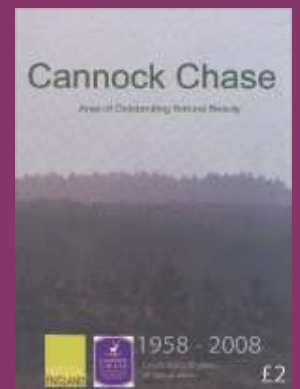
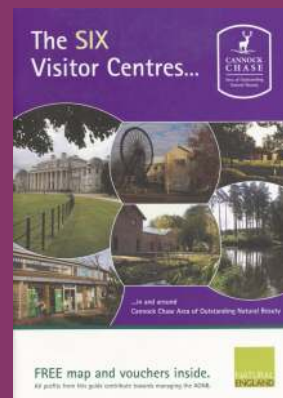
The sun shone brightly all day and Andy Wilson was surprised to see how much goes on in our small area. He was particularly complimentary about the impact of the efforts of the Partnership with the low level of resources to hand.

Postscript: One of the stops during the tour was Castle Ring, the Iron Age hill fort. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument in the ownership of Cannock Chase District Council, who were working towards achieving Green Flag status for the site. The good news is that they did it! The site was judged to be welcoming, safe, well maintained, environmentally sustainable and with strong involvement from the local community. The Green Flag will be officially raised at a celebratory event in September.

Buy your slice of the AONB

Two publications funded from the Sustainable Development Fund are now available for sale. The new Six Visitor Centres booklet is available at the giveaway price of 50p from Cannock Chase Visitor Centre at Marquis Drive, Museum of Cannock Chase, The Wolseley Centre, Birches Valley Forest Centre and The Innovation Centre at Chasewater. The price includes a map and money off vouchers, so it's well worth the 50p! Proceeds will be used for a future re-print.

Also available at £2 is a photographic book by Keith Harris, which celebrates the 50th anniversary of Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Proceeds from this publication will be put towards projects within the AONB. It's available from the Museum of Cannock Chase, or from the AONB Unit (postage charge will be added).



If you ever cross the sea to Northern Ireland...

...be sure to take your passport with you!

This year's National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Annual Conference took place in Northern Ireland from 7th-9th July 2009 and it hardly rained at all! Mind you it was a bit windy, especially on the coast. The conference venue this year was the University of Coleraine and the first day was packed with presentations from Government Ministers from Wales and Northern Ireland plus a range of others totalling 12. AONBs in Northern Ireland feel they are behind the mainland in terms of recognition and their funding is much less than ours - but they're working on it!

Much of the conference was aimed at giving our colleagues in the Northern Ireland AONBs, of which there are 8, some much needed support and to share our experiences in working in protected landscapes. The second day of site

visits offered a wide variety of experiences from the gently touristy to sea kayaking and surfing - we need at this point to state that the intrepid trio from Cannock Chase AONB went for the less active experiences! The trio were Ruth, Anne and our Joint Committee Chairman, Cllr Neil Roberts.

As hosts of last year's conference, we were able to contrast, compare and enjoy a little more this year, but we also had some wise words to pass on to next year's hosts, the Kent Downs, who are planning some exchange visits with their European partners as part of the conference.

Details of the conference and presentations given, including a DVD from the English Minister can be accessed via the National Association of AONBs website, www.aonb.org.uk.

Have you seen the signs?



Just to make sure you know you've arrived, the first of our new Gateway signs have been installed at 3 locations in the AONB. These are on the A460 at Stile Cop, on Penkridge Bank Road at Pottal Pool and on Camp Road off the A34. The aim is to welcome visitors and make local people aware that they are entering our special landscape. As funds become available, we hope to have more of these installed.

You may also have seen the newly refreshed highways signs in Cannock Chase district. This was seen as an opportunity to update the brown tourist signs too and these are incorporating our logo on direction signs to the visitor centres.



Funding for this work has come from Section 106 monies held by Cannock Chase Council as part of the M6 Toll construction and each of the visitor centres and the AONB Unit contributed £1000 towards the cost. It's a big thank you to everyone of our partners who has helped achieve this milestone, especially Guy Pryer from Staffordshire County Council Highways, who has explored more of the AONB than he expected!

Focus on...

Phil Armshaw,
Cannock Chase Council
Countryside Services



Q1 What is your Partnership role?

I am a site manager with Cannock Chase Council and sit on the Officers Working Group.

Q2 How long have you worked for Countryside Services and how long have you been involved in the AONB Partnership?

18 years with CCC and since 1999 with the AONB partnership.

Q3 Which part of the AONB do you look after?

The urban fringes around Cannock specifically Hazelslade LNR and Castle Ring SAM also Hednesford Hills LNR as part of the wider landscape.

Q4 What is the best part the job?

Watching buzzards overhead - they were absent while I was growing up on the Chase.

Q5 What is the worst part of the job?

Stepping out of a vehicle into something brown and sticky!

Q6 Favourite place - work

Chetwyn Coppice.

Q7 Favourite place - real life

Black River Gorge National Park, Mauritius.

Q8 What makes you important to the AONB?

I wouldn't be so egotistical to presume that I am important to the AONB as everyone can be replaced and we all do it because we're keen and care. (We think he's inspiring, supportive, ready to help out whenever he can and a good bloke to have around!).

Q9 What one thing would you change about the AONB if your fairy godmother appeared?

I'd probably take it back in time to the early twentieth century but with the appreciation of just how important heathlands and grazing are. The open vistas and seeing the landform without its overcoat of pine plantation would be great.

Q10 If you were Prime Minister for the day, what law would you pass?

I'd make all drivers spend twelve months on motorbikes so that awareness of them increases.

Dates for your diary

Thursday 17th September 2009 - Willow Weaving Day with Riverwoods at Shugborough, booking essential, cost £10 per person to include all materials, refreshments and lunch. To book a place contact Emma or Anne at the AONB Unit on 01889 882613 or email cannockchase@staffordshire.gov.uk

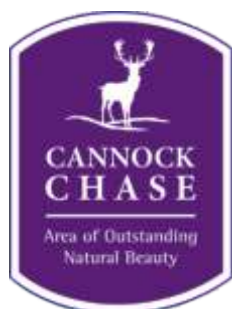
Wednesday 7th October 2009, 9:30am to 12:00noon - Litter Pick, contact the AONB Unit for location.

Friday 23rd October 2009, 9:30am to 3:30pm - Cannock Chase AONB Annual Conference at The Barns. Booking essential, contact the AONB Unit to register an interest.

Images acknowledgement:

Steve Welch,
Sam Carpenter
and AONB Unit

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Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is supported by: Natural England, 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, Defra, Forestry Commission, Friends of Cannock Chase, Hanson Aggregates, National Farmers Union, Ramblers Association, Staffordshire Children's Trust, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Swinnerton Cycles Forest Centre Ltd, Walton Chasers, West Midland Bird Club

Should you or someone you know require it, this newsletter can also be produced, on request, in large print. Please telephone: 01889 882613 or fax 01889 883912