



**Cannock Chase AONB Partnership
Meeting of the Joint Committee**

Thursday 19th March 2020 at 10.30AM
The Wolseley Centre, Stafford, ST17 0WT
 For directions [click here](#)

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**Cannock Chase AONB Partnership
Meeting of the Joint Committee**

**Thursday 5th December 2019 at 2pm
The Rudyard Suite, Staffordshire Place 1, Stafford, ST16 2DH**

Members present

Councillor Frances Beatty
(FB) Chairperson
Councillor John Preece (JP)
Councillor Len Bates (LB)
Cllr Mark Winnington

Representing

Stafford Borough Council

Cannock Chase Council
South Staffordshire Council
Staffordshire County Council (part of meeting)

Officers present

Sarah Bentley (SB)	Staffordshire County Council
Glenn Watson (GW)	Cannock Chase Council
Janene Cox (JC)	Commissioner for Culture and Communities, Staffs County Council
Lee Bickerton (LB)	Senior Finance Business Partner
Ian Marshall (IM)	Cannock Chase AONB Officer
Richard Harris (RH)	Cannock Chase AONB officer
Julia Banbury (JB)	Cannock Chase AONB officer
Bill Waller (BW)	Stafford Borough Council

Advisers present

Roger Broadbent (RB)	West Midland Bird Club
Sam Caraway (SC)	National Trust
Mike Shurmer (MS)	RSPB

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:

Cllr Angela Lax, Lichfield District Council
Cllr Gill Heath, Staffordshire County Council
John Rowe, Staffordshire County Council
Gary Kelsey, Forestry England
Julian Woolford, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
June Jukes, Friends of Cannock Chase
Craig Jordan, Lichfield District Council
Cllr Patricia Ansell, Staffordshire Parish Councils Association
Kelly Harris, South Staffordshire Council
Hazel McDowall, Natural England

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

Fixed Point Photography. 20 volunteers attended a training day on 2nd September – details of which were circulated to members of the JC.

Managing Cannock Chase. A recent update on the management of the Country Park has been posted on the AONB website on 3 December.

Colchester Declaration. Still needs to be circulated to the Joint Committee (IM)

Landscapes for Life Week. Cannock Chase's contribution featured a litter pick organised by CPRE and Cannock Chase featuring on 365 Great Things about Staffordshire on 21 September.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

(1) Recorded the minutes of the meeting of 25 July as an accurate record.

3. BUSINESS PLAN 2019-2021

To receive a report from the AONB Development Officer, including (a) Progress for Year 1 (b) Outline work plan for Year 2, (c) Underspend projects, (d) Sustainable Development Fund

The Committee considered a report on progress achieved against planned activity in Year 1 (2019-20) of the Business Plan, and an outline work plan for Year 2 (2020-21).

IM highlighted the considerable amount of activity that was being delivered, despite the AONB Unit not being at full strength until August 2019. This includes a number of additional activities over and above those included in the approved Business Plan. This is all credit to RH and JB in the AONB Unit and all of the partners in the Task and Finish Groups.

The main priority for Year 1 has been to deliver the Underspend Plan that has been agreed with Defra. Significant progress continues to be made against most of the activities. The position at 22 November 2019 is for a predicted outturn of £105,603 (against a budget estimate of £97,100). This overspend to the Underspend Plan can be covered by utilising the AONB's Core and Action Projects budget for the current financial year, which is giving an anticipated underspend of £30,432.

Defra has made clear that this is the last year for which any underspend is going to be allowed to be carried over. In order to fully utilise this year's underspend, therefore, and avoid refunding any monies to Defra, two further potential activities have been identified to add to the two remaining activities in the Underspend Plan not yet begun. These are:

- Collation of invertebrate data
- Collation of bat data
- Development of a place brand for Cannock Chase
- Preparation of car park design standards

GW commented that the Partnership is in a good position to mop up the underspend.

SB reported that Defra has indicated that they won't hold it against us if we have to return any budget, and that we have to be realistic about what can be achieved in the time available.

SC offered support from the National Trust with the development of a place brand, based on their experiences of telling the story around Shugborough Hall.

In response to Member questions, it was reported that Defra doesn't yet know its financial support for AONBs from April 2020, but that a continuation of present financial support is being budgeted for.

In response to a question from MS, it was confirmed that the continuation of the nightjar survey is included in Year 2 of the Business Plan.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- (1) Noted the report and for the outline work plan for Year 2 of the Business Plan for the AONB Partnership to be worked up and brought back to the Joint Committee for approval in March 2020.**
-

4. FINANCIAL REPORT

To receive a report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee

The Committee considered a report by LB, who presented the revenue forecast for this financial year, and the revenue budget for 2020/21.

The predicted outturn for the end of the financial year totals £159,997 compared to the approved net budget of £190,429, giving an anticipated underspend of £30,432. If AONB officers are unable to fully spend this year's budget, £7,608 will be transferred to the AONB Reserve, while the remaining £22,824 underspend on the Defra funding will need to be refunded to Defra.

The Sustainable Development Fund has a balance of £6,486 yet to be allocated,. AONB Officers are discussing further projects so that the Fund will be fully spent by the end of the financial year.

For 2020/21 the core budget will increase due to an annual inflationary uplift of 2% on salaries and 0% on all non-pay items. SDF funding will reduce to £13,069, with £10,000 being allocated to AONB projects.

It is estimated that the balance on AONB reserves at the financial year end will be £60,007.

Members confirmed that they are content for the local authority contributions for the next financial year.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- (1) Noted progress on the current net revenue spend for 2019/20 and**
- (2) Agreed the draft net revenue budget for 2020/21**

5. PLANNING UPDATE

To receive a report from the AONB Planning Officer including (a) Development control and planning policy, and (b) HS2

JB reported that she had received for comment 46 planning applications, of which she had made written observations on 23. The consultation process appears to be working and she is generally satisfied that the LPAs are taking on board the advice of the AONB Partnership.

LB expressed his disappointment with the appearance of the Sister Dora Care Home built at Milford, and asked whether or not the AONB had spoken at the planning meeting, and if we could get some tree planting on the site? In response, JB confirmed that the application was prior to her appointment and she didn't believe the AONB had spoken at the meeting. JB confirmed that in response to more recent applications relating to the site she had recommended additional tree and hedge planting to improve mitigation.

The Trent Sow Parklands HS2 Group is working with Land Use Consultants (LUC) to develop both general and Detailed Design Principles (DDPs) for works across the project area in order to secure the sympathetic integration of the railway into the landscape. LUC has circulated a second draft of the DDPs which, given the timetable, will not now be available for circulation and approval by the Joint Committee. Accordingly, it is requested that delegated authority is given to Officers to sign off the latest, 2nd draft of Design Guide for HS2.

In response to concerns expressed by FB about the design quality of the proposed viaduct that will cross the Trent Valley, SC confirmed that the Group is working hard to influence what they can and to encourage HS2 to design an aesthetically appealing structure, such as that which is being designed elsewhere on the route of HS2 in the Colne Valley.

In addition to developing Detailed Design Principles, SC reported on the £1.5 million environmental enhancement fund. Applications have been received from the community for a range of large and small projects addressing nature recovery, cycle access improvements and enhancements to the historic environment.

RB observed that HS2 can be used positively – WMBC has provided HS2 with all of its bird records, and HS2 staff carry out conservation work on nature reserves.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- (1) Noted the progress made on planning matters**
- (2) Noted the progress of the work of the local group on HS2 Phase 2a**
- (3) Agreed to give delegated authority to Officers to sign off the 2nd Draft of Design Guide for HS2 – Design Principles on behalf of the AONB Partnership, and to email the Final Draft to Members for information.**

6. AONB PLANNING PROTOCOL

To receive a report from the AONB Planning Officer

The AONB Unit has been working with planning officers to produce a Planning Protocol that provides the opportunity and procedure for the AONB Joint Committee to comment on relevant planning applications and the preparation of development plans and associated documents.

Members raised issues with the planning protocol around (1) making reference to applications for traveller's sites, and (2) including wording regarding concern for sustainability and climate change issues, and requested these were referred back to the Landscape and Planning Task and Finish Group to agree amendments as necessary.

It was also suggested that the protocol should set out "red lines" for development that the AONB Partnership wished to see. It was pointed out, however, that the protocol purely sets out between the LPAs and the AONB the agreed processes for consultation. The emerging guidance documents prepared in consultation with the LPAs, would be the location for setting out expectations regarding development, and these will promote good design sympathetic to the AONB's character

In response to a question about reviewing the protocol, it was confirmed that there is a mechanism for regular review within the protocol, and in view of the potential change recommended in the Glover Report around NPs and AONBs becoming statutory consultees there would be a need to review the protocol should that be taken forward by Government.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- (1) Noted the report**
 - (2) For the Planning Protocol to be taken back to the LPAs for further discussion to address the above issues and brought back to the Joint Committee for consideration and approval via email.**
-

7. AONB Annual Conference – evaluation and feedback

To receive a report from the AONB Development Officer

IM reported that 75 delegates had attended the AONB Annual Conference held on 4th October. Satisfaction levels with the organisation, content and usefulness of the event were very high, and a number of helpful suggestions had been received for suggested themes for future conferences.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- (1) Noted the report**
 - (2) Thanked all those involved for a well organised and successful event**
-

8. AONB Chairmen's Annual Conference, 28 November 2019

To receive a verbal report from the Chair.

FB and IM reported verbally on the AONB Chairmen's Annual Conference. A major discussion point at the event was the need for AONBs to be more inclusive and diverse and representative of society. This includes BME communities, the young, elderly, disabled and disadvantaged.

SB proposed that this was an important issue that the AONB needs to address. Community Impact Assessments could be used to allow us to consider the impacts and opportunities of our proposals and decisions and ensure equal access to our services.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- (1) Noted the verbal report**
 - (2) For the AONB to explore the use of Community Impact Assessments as a tool for ensuring equal access.**
-

9. Protected Landscapes Review

To receive a report from the AONB Development Officer

IM presented a report summarising the main points of the Government's independent Protected Landscapes Review. 27 recommendations are proposed around five themes: Landscapes alive for nature and beauty; Landscapes for everyone; Living in landscapes; More special places, and New ways of working.

The preparedness of Cannock Chase to respond to each of these recommendations was presented. It is concluded that c50% of the recommendations are already being delivered, are planned for delivery, or could be delivered with some additional requirements for cost or capacity. The remaining c50% of the recommendations would need significant additional funding and/or capacity to deliver.

Members asked what the AONB Partnership can do to improve its state of readiness to deliver those recommendations that would require significant extra resources and/or capacity. SB responded that this was a task for the Officer Working Group to start to put flesh on the bones and investigate the costs.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- (1) Noted the recommendations of the Protected Landscapes Review and Cannock Chase AONB's state of Readiness to implement them.**
 - (2) Agreed that the Officer Working Group would identify how the AONB Partnership can deliver the recommendations and report back to Members.**
-

10. Any other business

No other business was raised.

11. Date, time and venue of next meeting

A calendar of AONB meetings for 2020 is in preparation.

Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Chairman moved:

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) indicated below”.

Part Two

12. AONB communications review and strategy

To receive a presentation from Cristian Marcucci, Staffordshire County Council Communications Team.

The AONB Unit has commissioned a review of the AONB Partnership’s current communications arrangements and recommendations for a future communication strategy that could support efforts to raise the profile of the AONB so that people are inspired to want to look after it; to increase the transparency of the work of the partnership; and motivate people to do more to look after this nationally important landscape.

The Review was progressed through

- Interviews with 22 members, officers and partners
- Site visit and review of digital and printed comms materials
- Reference to national best practice

Clarity of purpose

Agreement on need to protect and preserve Cannock Chase, manage visitor numbers, change visitor behaviour

BUT

- Confusion over who does what – AONB / SAC?
- Confusing picture for the public
- Risk of overlap, duplication of effort

Capacity

- Major issue – big agenda, limited resource
- Communications central to many items in the Management Plan
- SAC engagement officer responsible for digital communications and education
- AONB and SAC communications activity not aligned
- Options for specialist comms support – FTC, part-time, voluntary

Co-ordination

- Lacking – beyond meetings and annual conference, no systems in place for communications leads to keep each other informed
- SCC Head of Communications, unaware of the AONB team, its work, never heard of the SAC prior to the review
- Cannock Chase comms manager found out about the recent SAC consultation when he got a call from the Express & Star
- 2.5m visits to Cannock Chase every year – Enjoy Staffordshire, the county’s tourism arm has a non-existent relationship with AONB

Stakeholder management

- Beyond meetings and conference, people not kept informed or involved
- Real miss as these are the people who have a passion for Cannock Chase, should be the ambassadors and advocates for the work you are doing
- Several people valued former partner newsletter
- Press releases and other information – are they going to the right stakeholders as well as the media?

Branding

- Branding is muddled
- Land in public ownership - plethora of signs, information boards, road signs accumulated over time
- Leaflets with the old SCC logo retired more than 8 years ago
- Branding on websites unclear
- Place Branding exercise crucial

Digital communications

- Separate websites for the AONB Partnership and SAC Partnership is confusing
- Other protected landscapes, eg Peak District, have one website that covers everything

Recommendations

1. Work closer with SAC team - align communications activity
2. Increase communications capacity
3. Improve partner/stakeholder communications
4. Commission place branding exercise
5. Long-term vision: single website
6. Establish an AONB communications group
7. Sign up for membership of Destination Staffordshire

GW observed that the overwhelming impression of the review is that we must try a lot harder. There is tremendous scope to make huge improvements – both for internal as well as external communication. The timing is good to get out key messages around important issues, such as, mental health and climate change.

MW felt that the review had highlighted a bigger question around the relationship between the AONB Partnership and SAC Partnership and the need for an improved alignment of their roles. IM's view was that the focus of the branding exercise should be around Cannock Chase – the place, rather than the AONB or the SAC, and that people and organisations could be brought together and united around that.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- (1) Thanked Cristian and Rose for the presentation and the work they have undertaken.**
- (2) Noted the findings of the communications review.**
- (3) Set up a working group of Members and officers to devote time and energy to discuss the recommendations.**
- (4) Approved the AONB becoming a member of Destination Staffordshire.**

The meeting closed at 4pm.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

19th March 2019

Finance Update Revenue Budget 2019-20

Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee and the AONB Officer

Recommendations

1. a) **Revenue Budget Outturn 2019/20**

That progress on the current net revenue spend and forecast for 2019/20 is noted.

b) **The AONB Reserve**

That the current balance held on the AONB Reserve is noted.

c) **Defra Funding Settlement 2020/21**

The updated Defra funding settlement for 2020/21 is noted.

Part A

Why is it coming here – what decision(s) are required?

2. The Joint Committee in its role under the Partnership Agreement is responsible for:-
- The management of the core funding from Defra and the co-ordination of partner projects. This report updates the Joint Committee on progress to date on the current year's budget.
 - The approval of budget provision. The current proposal for the 2020/21 net revenue budget is recommended to the Joint Committee.

Reasons for Recommendations:

3. The recommendations represent an effective way to continue to carry forward the implementation of the Management Plan for the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership.

Part B

Background:

4. Revenue Budget Update 2019/20

- 4.1 The forecast financial position for the Core Budget is set out in *Appendix 1* which shows a nominal net spend to date of £115,077 together with the outturn currently predicted for the year. The predicted outturn for the end of the financial year totals £185,605 compared to the approved net budget of £190,429, giving an anticipated underspend of £4,824 in 2019/20 (Core and SDF). The majority of the forecast underspend is due to staff turnover savings against the Core Budget totalling £24,372 which has been partially offset by additional, committee approved spend against the Core Programmes budget totalling £27,437. £20,000 of this has been spent to develop a place brand for Cannock Chase AONB.
- 4.2 The latest forecast position for the 2019/20 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) is set out in *Appendix 2* with the total projects approved to date now equating to £16,636 in total. After the administration fee earned by the AONB Unit of £2,307 is deducted from the SDF Grant this leaves a underspend of £4,126 for this year.
- 4.3 These forecasted underspends, if fully realised, means £174 will be transferred to the AONB Reserve while the remaining £4,126 underspend on Defra funding will need to be refunded to Defra

5 The AONB Reserve

- 5.1 The balance on the Cannock Chase AONB Reserve stood at £149,035 at the start of 2019/20. A summary of the Reserve is attached as *Appendix 3*.
- 5.2 It has previously been recommended that the priorities for the use of the Reserve Fund should be as follows:
- Income from sales, donations and consultancy work should be available to supplement the delivery of projects within the Annual Action Plans and to provide 'matched funding' for any major grant applications and;
 - The remaining funds should be 'earmarked' to enable the AONB unit to respond to the implications of any potential future reductions in funding.
- 5.3 These priorities are reviewed annually in December of each year in conjunction with the annual update of the Cannock Chase AONB Risk Register.
- 5.4 It is estimated that the balance on this reserve at the end of 2019/20 will be £52,109. This is because it is anticipated that the underspends from the previous two financial years totalling £96,636 will be fully spent this financial year. Proposals for the use of these underspends were agreed at the March 2019 committee and subsequently agreed with Defra. The team is working hard to deliver the projects, which will then bring the budget back to a standard level of funding from 2020/21. The estimated balance also includes the forecasted underspend of £174 from this financial year being carried forward to the reserve.

6. Defra Funding Settlement 2020/21

- 6.1 The funding received from Defra for 2020/21 is £150,699, which represents an increase of £2,080 from the £148,589 received for 2019/20. See Appendix 4.
- 6.2 The additional £2,080 has been added to the budget for AONB projects increasing this amount from £10,000 to £12,080.
- 6.3 The settlement includes an allocation of £9,510 from a dedicated Biodiversity Fund. The team needs to set out how they will use this part of the settlement to carry out activities that will benefit biodiversity and more broadly how we will deliver nature recovery, work towards net zero carbon through nature-based solutions, and support the needs of communities in modern Britain.

7. Equalities Implications

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Equal Opportunities policies of the County Council.

8. Legal Implications

Actions recommended in this report are in accordance with the provisions of the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership Agreement.

9. Resource and Value for Money Implications

This report recommends actions to ensure the continued efficient delivery of the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan and reflects the principles set out in the Partnership Agreements.

10. Risk Implications

If continuity of funding and spend are not continued as recommended to the Joint Committee, then the five authorities involved in the current Partnership will need to seek other methods of fulfilling their statutory obligations for the AONB under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Report authors:

Authors Name	Lee Bickerton	Finance Unit	01785 854879
	Sarah Bentley	Rural County	01785 619184

List of Background papers

None

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Cannock Chase AONB Core and Project Costs

Predicted Outturn for 2019/2020

February 2020	Budget	Spent or Committed to Date	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Core Budget				
Salaries	132,500	97,965	108,442	-24,058
Travel and Subsistence	2,200	1,320	1,429	-771
Training & First Aid Payments	1,760	2,318	2,318	558
Recruitment	400	299	299	-101
Staff and Associated Costs	136,860	101,902	112,488	-24,372
Office Equipment	2,600	-21,118	2,104	-496
Annual Audit	400	0	400	0
Volunteer Costs	1,000	0	0	-1,000
National Association of AONB's Membership	2,700	2,619	2,619	-81
Print & Publicity	3,000	815	815	-2,185
Partnership Running Costs	9,000	9,000	9,000	0
Core Budget subtotal	155,560	93,218	127,426	-28,134
Core Programmes				
Website	1,000	6,300	7,800	6,800
Monitoring Projects	2,000	0	0	-2,000
Annual Conference	1,800	1,781	1,781	-19
Community Involvement and Awareness	0	0	0	0
Core Activity	7,000	5,386	29,655	22,655
Core Programmes subtotal	11,800	13,467	39,237	27,437
Sustainable Development Fund	23,069	8,392	18,943	-4,126
Total Budget	190,429	115,077	185,605	-4,824
Funded By:				
DEFRA Grant				
Core	125,520	103,960	124,997	-523
Sustainable Development Fund	23,069	3,407	18,943	-4,126
DEFRA Grant subtotal	148,589	107,368	143,939	-4,650
Local Authority Contributions				
Lichfield District Council	2,092	2,092	2,092	0
South Staffordshire District Council	2,092	2,092	2,092	0
Cannock Chase District Council	8,368	8,368	8,368	0
Stafford Borough Council	8,368	8,368	8,368	0
Staffordshire County Council	20,920	20,920	20,920	0
Local Authority Contributions subtotal	41,840	41,840	41,840	0
Sales and Donations	0	0	0	0
Membership Fee Income	0	0	0	0
Funding from(+)/to reserve(-)		0	-174	-174
Total Funding	190,429	149,208	185,605	-4,824

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Sustainable Development Fund

Budget Update for 2019/2020

March 2020	Budget	Spent or Committed to Date	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects				
Longdon Parish Council - Information Boards	700	0	700	0
Love Cannock Chase - Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles	1,250	0	1,250	0
Beauesert Care Farm CIC - Beauesert Eco Arts Trails	4,828	4,828	4,828	0
Chelmarsh Ringing Group - Bird Boxes	1,498	1,497	1,497	-1
Brereton and Ravenhill PC - Information board	500	500	500	0
National Trust - Parkland Planting Programme	7,861	0	7,861	0
Approved Projects Total	16,637	6,825	16,636	-1
Admin Fees	2,307	2,307	2,307	0
Unallocated	4,125		0	-4,125
TOTAL	23,069	9,132	18,943	-4,126

Cannock Chase AONB Reserve

Financial Year	Opening Balance	Income/ Donations	Membership Fees	Visitor Survey Work	Balance of Admin Fees / Underspends	Interest	Closing Balance
	£	£		£	£	£	£
2007/2008	10,214				(1,766)		8,448
2008/2009	8,448	572			7,713		16,733
2009/2010	16,733	1,326			5,795		23,854
2010/2011	23,854	896	525	9,564	3,823		38,662
2011/2012	38,662	1,240	1,367	17,845	(221)		58,893
2012/2013	58,893	387	1,108		2,685	195	63,270
2013/2014	63,270	1,001	1,675		2,459	249	68,654
2014/2015	68,654	596	1,720		1,273	289	72,532
2015/2016	72,532		569		(1,883)	293	71,512
2016/2017	71,512	1,475	553		1,457	132	75,129
2017/2018	75,129	1,471	52		32,512	189	109,353
2018/2019	109,353	169	104		36,417	685	146,728
2019/2020	146,728				2,307		149,035
		9,134	7,673	27,409	92,572	2,033	149,035

Estimated balance at end of 2019/2020

52,109

Appendix 4

Mar 2020 draft Cannock Chase AONB Budget 2020-21

	Total	Defra Grant
AONB Core Budget		
Staff Salaries and Associated costs	£135,620.00	£101,715.00
Office Equipment	£2,600.00	£1,950.00
Annual Audit	£400.00	£300.00
Volunteers	£500.00	£375.00
National Liaison	£3,000.00	£2,250.00
Print & Publicity	£5,000.00	£3,750.00
Partnership Running Costs	£9,000.00	£6,750.00
Core Budget subtotal	£156,120.00	£117,090.00
Core Programmes		
AONB Website	£0.00	£0.00
Annual Conference	£2,000.00	£1,500.00
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	£9,240.00	£6,930.00
Core Programmes subtotal	£11,240.00	£8,430.00
Sustainable Development Fund	£13,069.00	£13,069.00
AONB Projects	£12,080.00	£12,080.00
Total Expenditure	£192,509.00	£150,669.00
	Total	% of Expenditure
Funded By:		
DEFRA Grant		
Core	£125,520.00	75.00%
Sustainable Development Fund	£13,069.00	100.00%
AONB Projects	£12,080.00	100.00%
DEFRA Grant subtotal	£150,669.00	
Local Authority Contributions		
Cannock Chase Council	£8,368.00	5.00%
Stafford Borough Council	£8,368.00	5.00%
Lichfield District Council	£2,092.00	1.25%
South Staffordshire Council	£2,092.00	1.25%
Staffordshire County Council	£20,920.00	12.50%
Local Authority Contributions subtotal	£41,840.00	25.00%
Total Income	£192,509.00	100.00%

Item 4 - Report of the AONB Development Officer

Business Plan 2019-21

Item for: Information and Decision

Author: Ian Marshall, AONB Development Officer

Financial implications: The work plan for year 2 of the Business Plan will be funded through core AONB budget provision for 2020-21 supplemented, where appropriate and with approval, through the AONB reserve or from external funding resources. This will become clear as development work proceeds.

Recommendations

- (1) That progress on Year 1 activities is noted.
- (2) That the work plan for Year 2 is approved.
- (3) That changes to the Sustainable Development Fund are approved.

Background

- 1 The Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019-24 sets out the vision for the AONB and the policies and actions required over the next five years to work towards that vision. The Management Plan provides a framework for everyone operating in the AONB and includes actions that many organisations may be involved in delivering. Delivery is supported through Task and Finish Groups covering the Historic Environment, Land Management & Biodiversity, Landscape & Planning and Visitor Management.
- 2 A two year business plan gives details of how the AONB Partnership itself, notably through its dedicated staff team, will operate to deliver its contract with Defra and the commitments in the AONB Management Plan during 2019-2021.

Progress in year 1 (2019-2020)

3. A wide range of activities has taken place during this period through the efforts of the AONB team, the work of Partnership members and the use of the Sustainable Development Fund to achieve the strategic direction set out in the AONB Management Plan and accompanying Business Plan. These have been funded through core AONB budget combined with the utilisation of some of the AONB Reserves.

4. Some highlights from the AONB Partnership's key areas of activity include:

Landscape and planning

- Working with statutory undertakers to underground 3.5 km of powerlines

- Preparation of planning guidance – setting / views
- Preparation of planning guidance – building design
- Input to development of design principles for HS2
- Review of the AONB Planning protocol
- Ensuring high quality and appropriate development by monitoring and inputting to planning policy and development management

Historic environment

- Chase through Time legacy project development work
- Training volunteers to survey scheduled monuments and non-designated heritage assets

Land management and biodiversity

- Allocation of £190,000 from National Grid for Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to manage Gentleshaw Common
- Heathland restoration feasibility study (land exchange)
- Surveying and assessing 19 Local Wildlife Sites
- Nightjar breeding survey
- White-clawed crayfish recovery

Visitor management

- Re-designing the website for the AONB
- Communications review and strategy
- Development of a place brand for Cannock Chase
- Supporting the development of site user and car park implementation plans prepared by the SAC Partnership

Community engagement

- Development of e-learning training courses about Cannock Chase and the AONB
- Volunteering opportunities for fixed point photography, Great War Hut interpretation and assessment of heritage assets
- 2019 Annual AONB Conference

Sustainable Development Fund

- Six projects were supported including: the preparation of information boards by Longdon and Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Councils, parkland tree planting, bird box installation, and improving health and wellbeing through the arts.
- Grants totalling £16,637 have been awarded.

National collaboration

- The Cannock Chase AONB Partnership has been collaborating nationally with the NAAONB and AONB family on nature recovery, arts in the landscape, and responding to the Glover Review of Protected Landscapes.
5. For a variety of reasons, some activities earmarked for year 1 in the Business Plan could not take place, and these have been deferred to Year 2 to allow time for further discussion with partners about need, methodology, and how these activities might best be delivered. These include: surveys of woodland Local Wildlife Sites; collation of invertebrate data; collation of bat data; Long-eared owl survey.

Work plan for year 2 (2020-21)

6. Year 2 of the Business Plan will continue to deliver a broad range of commitments across all themes in the AONB Management Plan. The projects and activities set out are a combination of:
- Activities deferred from Year 1 (as set out in section 5).
 - Delivery strategies and fund raising for Year 1 activities (eg, Chase through Time legacy project).
 - Implementing the conclusions and recommendations identified in Year 1 projects (eg, Communications Review and Strategy, and place brand commission).
 - Disseminating and encouraging engagement with the outputs from Year 1 projects (such as, planning guidance for building design and views/setting, management recommendations for Local Wildlife Sites, Local Geological Sites, and heritage assets).
 - Supporting national initiatives (eg, nature recovery, arts in the landscape, and responding the Designated Landscapes Review)
 - Ongoing activities (eg, developing our community engagement, supporting our volunteers, managing the sustainable Development Fund, ensuring high quality and landscape-led development).
 - New activities (eg, the establishment of a CIO for Cannock Chase, arts initiatives, the development of a deer management strategy, bespoke research to understand “missing” audiences, actions to encourage sustainable travel).
- 7 The following table highlights the main projects proposed for development in 2020-21. At this stage, a number are outline proposals awaiting final development, and further work is needed to estimate their likely costs and means of delivery.

Activity
Local arts initiatives
Chase through time legacy project
Nature Recovery Plan for Cannock Chase AONB
Heathland / forestry land exchange

AONB communications implementation
Cannock Chase place brand implementation
Poetry walks and workshops
Poetry anthology project
Library resource pack
Woodland Local Wildlife Sites survey
White Claw Crayfish recovery
Nightjar survey Phase 2
Collation of invertebrate data
Collation of bat data
Long-eared owl survey
Understanding engagement with under-represented groups
Review and conclude AONB Interpretation Strategy
Sustainable travel interpretation totems and posters at train stations

Sustainable Development Fund

- 8 The Sustainable Development Fund is a valuable means of engaging different audiences within the AONB and delivering AONB Management Plan objectives through small grant schemes. However, community interest in the Fund has declined and it is proving increasingly difficult to allocate all of the budget (for example, in 2019-20 £4,125 out of £23,069 was unspent)
- 9 In 2020/21, therefore, the amount allocated to the SDF is going to be reduced to £13,069, and the remainder reallocated for use for matched funding for AONB project development.

Appendix 1. Cannock Chase AONB Partnership. Business Plan 2019-21. Progress for Year 1 and outline work plan for Year 2.

3/10/2020

Item 4

Appendix 1

Cannock Chase AONB Partnership

Business Plan 2019-21

Progress for Year 1 and work plan for Year 2

Marshall, Ian (F&C)
19
CANNOCK CHASE AONB UNIT



Cannock Chase AONB Partnership

Business Plan 2019-21

Progress for Year 1 and work plan for Year 2

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- 1 Introduction
- 2 Core activity
- 3 Introduction to funding
- 4 Core funding
- 5 Sustainable Development Fund
- 6 Utilisation of AONB Reserve
- 7 Project development 2020-21

Appendix 1. Cannock Chase AONB Partnership Risk Register

Appendix 2. DEFRA – AONB funded activities

1 Introduction

- 1.1. Cannock Chase AONB Partnership brings together local authorities, statutory agencies, voluntary and community bodies to manage the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 1.2. The primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. In pursuing this primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment. Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.
- 1.3. The Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019-24 sets out the vision for the AONB and the policies and actions required over the next five years to work towards that vision. The Management Plan provides a framework for everyone operating in the AONB and includes actions that many organisations may be involved in delivering. Delivery is supported through Task and Finish Groups covering the Historic Environment, Land Management & Biodiversity, Landscape & Planning and Visitor Management.
- 1.4. A two year business plan gives details of how the AONB Partnership itself, notably through its dedicated staff team, will operate to deliver its contract with Defra and our commitments in the AONB Management Plan during 2019-2021.
- 1.5. This report sets out the progress achieved against planned activity in Year 1 (2019-2020) of the business plan, and proposes our work plan for Year 2 (2020-2021).

2. Core Activity

- 2.1. The following table outlines progress achieved during 2019-20 against core activities identified in the Business Plan, and our planned activities for 2020-21.
 - Activities are referenced against the relevant action number contained within the AONB Management Plan 2019-24, where appropriate.

- New activities not previously identified in the Business Plan are highlighted yellow.
- Activities funded in 2019/20 through the AONB underspend are highlighted red and a double Asterix **
- Activities led by the AONB Unit and/or supported by Tasks and Finish Groups are indicated (HE – Historic Environment, LM – Land Management & Biodiversity, LP – Landscape & Planning, VM – Visitor Management)

No.	Activity	Ref	2019/20 progress to date	2020/21 work plan	Lead support
Organising and supporting partnership meetings					
1	Quarterly meetings of the Joint Committee and Officers Working Group		Meetings have taken place throughout the year.	Ongoing	AONB Unit
2	Organise and coordinate Task and Finish Group meetings, currently: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape & Planning (LPO) • Land Management (LMO) • Historic Environment (LMO) • Visitor Management (DM) 		All task and finish groups have met throughout the year, except for the CIO development group which has yet to be established.	Ongoing meetings as required. Establish CIO development group.	AONB Unit
3	Organise and run the Annual AONB Conference	A7	Held on 4 October 2019 at Brocton Hall Golf Club. 75 delegates, with very positive feedback.	Scheduled for October 2020.	AONB Unit
NAAONB activity					
4	Contribute to the activities of the NAAONB including annual conference, AONB Chairmen's conference and AONB Lead Officer meetings as appropriate.		<p>Attended NAAONB annual conference in July 2019.</p> <p>Attended AONB Chairmen's conference 29 November 2019.</p> <p>Attended AONB Lead Officer meeting 10/11 February 2019</p>	<p>Attend NAAONB annual conference (July 2020).</p> <p>Attend AONB Chairmen's conference (November 2020).</p> <p>Attend AONB Lead Officer meeting (February 2020).</p>	AONB Unit

			<p>Participation in Colchester Declaration Nature Recovery Steering Group.</p> <p>Supporting NAAONB Arts in the landscape: Connecting people to nature project to advise how AONBs embed the arts into their management plans.</p>	<p>Participate in new West Midlands Protected Landscapes Group.</p> <p>Apply recommendations of Colchester Declaration Nature Recovery Steering Group.</p> <p>Assess findings of Arts in the landscape: connecting people to nature project and explore development of local arts initiatives and establishment of an AONB Arts Group by Q2.</p>	
Monitoring delivery					
5	Monitor progress with the management plan and report to the JC		Progress reported annually (Q4) against the Business Plan	Progress reported annually (Q4) against the Business Plan	AONB Unit
6	Produce an annual report on AONB activity		No Annual Report was produced for 2018/19.	2019/20 Annual Report to be published by Q2.	AONB Unit
7	Report to the NAAONB performance statistics for Cannock Chase AONB against Key Performance Indicators		Partial figures for 2018-19 submitted in August 2019.	<p>Performance management recording framework to be set up for capturing figures by Q1.</p> <p>Figures for 2019-20 to be submitted in August 2020.</p>	AONB Unit
Project development and fundraising					
8	Develop projects to deliver AONB management plan priorities		Several projects have been progressed during 2019-21, utilising AONB underspend (see Section 6).	Projects to be identified and progressed through core budget and progressing external funding.	AONB Unit. All groups
9	**Undertake research and development work for next phase of Chase through Time heritage project for the AONB**	B9	Commission underway with Allen Archaeology to assess the data generated by the original	Assess findings (Q1) and explore external funding opportunities for delivery strategy (Q2/3),	HE

			Chase through Time project. This enhanced understanding will then inform a strategy to manage, interpret and provide access to heritage assets in a sustainable way. Due to report by end March 2020.	leading to funding application (Q4).	
10	Undertake research and development work to develop natural environment enhancement project in the AONB	A13	Consider requirements for the preparation of a nature recovery plan for Cannock Chase AONB, including a spatial map for nature recovery, as our contribution to the AONB family's Colchester Declaration.	Organise workshop Q1 to identify way forward. Prepare a Nature Recovery Plan for Cannock Chase AONB, with key stakeholders by Q4.	LM
11	Secure external funding to support project delivery		In 2019-20 most project activity is being funded through the Cannock Chase underspend (see Section 6 for a list)	External funding opportunities to be pursued as necessary to support project delivery	All groups
12	**Heathland restoration feasibility evaluation**	B7	Commission underway with ADAS for feasibility evaluation of a land exchange to return up to 650 has of the public forest estate to heathland, if an equivalent area of land for compensation tree planting can be found – due to report by end March 2020.	Further activity awaiting consideration of conclusions from feasibility evaluation.	LM
13	Conserve and enhance key species and habitats	A2	Allocation of National Grid mitigation grant of £190,000 to Staffordshire Wildlife Trust for Gentleshaw Common SSSI and nature reserve	SWT monitor and report to AONB in accordance with agreement.	AONB Unit

14	**Increase awareness and appreciation of Local Geological sites**	B19	Keele University commissioned to carry out condition assessment of Local Geological Sites – due to report by end March 2020.	Identify management actions recommended and communicate to site owners (Q2).	LM
15	Deer management strategy and action plan	B5	Deer impact assessment completed. Deer census completed. Additional deer deterrents installed along Penkridge Road.	Prepare strategy and action plan with landowners by Q3.	AONB Unit
CIO development					
16	Explore development of a charitable incorporated organisation to support AONB delivery, including functions, relationship to partnership, how it would work, resourcing etc.	A4	Legal advice received on the pros and cons of a CIO. No further progress possible during 2019-20, and activity deferred to 2020-21.	Activity planned for Q1/2 2020	AONB Unit
17	Establishment of CIO including recruitment of trustees etc. as agreed by Partnership	A4	Activity awaiting conclusion of exploration above.	Establish CIO Q3/4 2020.	AONB Unit
Raising awareness of the AONB					
18	Promote new AONB website, and further develop project sections	A11	New Cannock Chase AONB website went live on 31 October 2019. AONB Unit received web CMS training on 14 November 2019.	Ongoing development of website and updating news items.	AONB Unit

			Incorporation of Fixed Point Photography webpages, and chase through time webpages.		
19	Raising awareness of AONB activity via press / media, partner websites, talks and events – minimum 4 events per annum	A11	News updates feature on new website.	Further activity awaiting recommendations of Communications Strategy.	VM
20	AONB Communications Review and Strategy	A8, A9, A11	Staffordshire County Council commission to review current communication's procedures, activities and future requirements reported Nov/Dec 2019. Communications Strategy due March 2020. FDA Design commissioned to develop a place brand for Cannock Chase commissioned in February 2020.	Further activity awaiting Communications Strategy recommendations. Conclude place brand development (Q1). Explore delivery opportunities arising from brand implementation plan and seek partners and funding (Q2/3).	VM
Community involvement					
21	**Support further development of Love Cannock Chase initiative to engage communities and businesses in the management and celebration of the AONB**	B11	Engagement framework prepared by Cannock Chase Healthy Lifestyles and AONB Unit. Development of online e-learning training course about Cannock Chase AONB to be delivered by end March 2020.	Publicise e-learning training course with key audiences (volunteers, public bodies and businesses), and seek use as part of staff induction.	VM
22	Explore the development of an AONB quality mark for businesses	B14	Activity deferred to 2020/21, pending outputs from place brand commission.	Sense of place toolkit will be prepared through place brand commission (Q1) will include recommendations for business	VM

				engagement. The need for a quality mark for businesses will be reassessed at that time.	
23	Poetry walks and workshops	B11		Poetry walks and workshops with Staffordshire Poet Laureate in Q1 and Q3.	AONB Unit
24	Poetry Anthology Project	B11		Preparation and publication of anthology of poetry inspired by Cannock Chase.	AONB Unit
25	Library resource pack	B20		Creation of a resource pack that library staff could use to inform local Staffordshire children about Cannock Chase and responsible tourism.	AONB Unit
Liaison with partners and stakeholders					
26	Liaise with landowners, local authorities and other partners to facilitate engagement in AONB activity	B2, A12, A5, B3	Relationships are being renewed now that the AONB Unit is in post.	Assess with CLA and NFU the potential for farm landscape enhancements (by Q2), and develop an AONB offer that could utilise and target woodland and boundary treatment grant opportunities, eg, HS2 (by Q3).	LM
Provision of landscape planning advice					
27	Review AONB planning protocol		Planning protocol drafted and agreed by all local authorities – ready for approval by Joint Committee	Implement procedures and monitor effectiveness	LP
28	Input to planning policy and development management		Ongoing	Ongoing	AONB Unit
29	**Develop design guidance for the AONB**	A1	Commission to develop building design guidance due to report March 2020	Seek adoption as SPD by Cannock Chase Council, Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire	LP

				<p>Borough Council and Stafford Borough Council by Q4.</p> <p>Promote, use and disseminate guidance document amongst elected members, officers and developers.</p>	
30	**Develop AONB guidance on views and the AONB setting**	A15	Commission to develop guidance on views and the AONB setting – due to report March 2020.	<p>Seek adoption as SPD by Cannock Chase Council, Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire Borough Council and Stafford Borough Council by Q4.</p> <p>Promote, use and disseminate guidance document amongst elected members, officers and developers.</p>	LP
31	Review current guidance on highways and horsiculture to determine how to take forward	B1	Consideration given to update the AONB Highways Design Guide 2005 through preparation of shorter guidance document.	Produce, with SCC Highways Team, Highways Design guidance by Q3.	LP
32	Input to HS2 landscape group and Commonwealth Games to minimise negative impacts and maximise benefits to the AONB	B8	<p>Design principles for HS2 signed off and endorsed by AONB Partnership.</p> <p>Attendance at Commonwealth Games stakeholder workshop November 2019.</p>	<p>Ongoing input to design development, as required, to HS2 Trent-Sow Parklands Group and Commonwealth Games event.</p> <p>Represent HS2 Trent Sow Parklands Group on HS2 regional independent Design Panel.</p> <p>Input to HS2 environmental enhancement schemes.</p>	<p>LP</p> <p>AONB Unit</p>

	Undergrounding				
33	Work with statutory undertakers to explore opportunities for undergrounding powerlines in the AONB		Between September – December 2019 approximately 3.5 kilometres of overhead electricity lines from White House to Moors Gorse was removed and placed underground.	In 2020 a further kilometre of overhead lines at Shugborough Estate will be removed to restore the historic character of this iconic Grade I listed park. Pursue further opportunities with Western Power as they arise.	LP
	Monitoring landscape condition				
34	Coordinate fixed point photography monitoring		Training workshop with 20 volunteers held on 2 September 2019. All fixed point photography records have been transferred onto new AONB website.	Fixed Point Photography monitoring ongoing twice a year, and the results uploaded onto the AONB website. Hold an interim review with volunteers (Q1).	LP
35	**Assess condition of local wildlife sites in the AONB**	A2	19 sites have been surveyed and assessed by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.	6 additional woodland sites to be surveyed by Q2. Identify any recommended management actions and communicate to land owners.	LM AONB Unit
36	**Undertake targeted surveys of flagship and indicator species**	A2	Crayfish survey and management measures implemented. First phase of Nightjar breeding survey carried out in 2019.	Continued removal of invasive Signal Crayfish. Nightjar breeding survey Phase two planned for Q2 2020. Collation of invertebrate data. Collation of bat data.	AONB Unit LM

			Audit of bats, invertebrates and long-eared owl survey did not take place.	Long-eared owl survey.	
37	Monitor condition of Scheduled Monuments in the AONB – Historic England to support	B16	Discussions underway with Historic England and Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Team to develop a strategy to assess the condition of the seven scheduled monuments located within Cannock Chase AONB. This will involve training volunteers on how to locate and assess the condition of these nationally important heritage assets.	Volunteers will put their training into practice, providing Historic England with up-to-date information on the condition of these monuments and enable them to provide targeted advice and support to landowners and other stakeholders.	HE
38	Assess condition of non-designated heritage assets	A14	Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Team and the National Trust will be training volunteers how to locate, identify, assess and record the condition of these features in the field. This information will assist landowners and stakeholders to make informed decisions on managing this important and extensive archaeological resource.	Identify any recommended management actions and communicate to land owners.	HE
Manage the Sustainable Development Fund					
39	Promote SDF, support applications where required and coordinate funding panel; management of claims etc.		6 projects have been approved in 2019/21, amounting to £16,637 grants awarded in total.	Applications for the 2020/21 Sustainable Development Fund	

				will be launched in Q1, together with revised paperwork.	
Volunteering in the AONB					
40	Coordination and support to existing AONB volunteers	A6	Ongoing support being provided to volunteers engaged with Great War Hut, Fixed Point Photography, and Historic Environment surveys.	Provide ongoing support.	HE
41	Review of volunteering in the AONB to determine how the Partnership can add value to existing activity	A6	Support and engage with Cannock Chase Council Chase Up! Green Volunteer Network	Identify landowner volunteering needs and opportunities by Q2 and agree co-ordinated plan of action if required (Q3).	VM
Responding to the Designated Landscapes Review					
42	Adopt and implement recommendations from the Glover Review, and encourage implementation of actions led by others, e.g. government, local authorities		Support NAAONB and others to encourage Government to implement recommendations. Review Cannock Chase state of readiness for each of the 27 recommendations	Ensure that the principles of Landscapes for Everyone are embedded in the emerging Communications Strategy and development and roll-out of the Cannock Chase place brand implementation plan. Undertake bespoke research to seek to understand if, and why, specific groups are under-represented in the work of the AONB by Q3.	AONB Unit
Visitor management					
43	Develop more inspiring, provoking and co-ordinated interpretation across the Chase	A8	No activity in this period.	By Q4 revisit and bring to a conclusion the draft AONB Interpretation Strategy prepared in April 2016	VM

44	Improve visitor experience and impressions of the AONB by improving highways infrastructure such as welcome and gateway signage, reducing sign-clutter, and improvements to the roadside environment	A8	The SAC Partnership has prepared detailed implementation plans for car parks and site users.	Support the SAC Partnership to implement the car park and site user implementation plans. Prepare key landscape principles intended to assist all those involved in improving car parking provision on Cannock Chase (Q2).	AONB Unit VM
45	Encourage visitors to Cannock Chase to travel more sustainably	B12	No activity in this period.	Utilising the emerging Cannock Chase place brand design and install artwork for totems and posters located at train stations, introducing visitors to the AONB and the network of trails for walkers and cyclists from each station (Stafford, Rugeley, Hednesford and Cannock).	VM

3. Introduction to funding

3.1. Defra is the major funder for the AONB and issues a grant which includes funding for core activity, sustainable development fund and project funding. The grant is issued as a 'single pot' giving partnerships the flexibility to decide how to allocate it to different areas of activity, in line with treasury funding rules.

3.2. The allocation of the funding over the next two financial years is set out below in 4.3.

4. Core funding

4.1. Core funding covers essential activities to run the AONB partnership and are set out by Defra. They include staff costs, partnership running costs, management plan and monitoring. AONB funding levels are based on a national funding formula and Defra provides grant in aid to meet 75% of the costs as part of the single funding pot. The remaining 25% is provided by the local authorities based on a formula which takes into account the proportion of the AONB within their administrative areas.

4.2. Income for 2019-21 is as follows:

Source	% contribution	2019-20 £	2020-21 £
Defra	75	125,520	125,520*
Staffordshire County Council	12.5	20,920	20,920
Cannock Chase District Council	5	8,368	8,368
Stafford Borough Council	5	8,368	8,368
South Staffordshire Borough Council	1.25	2,092	2,092
Lichfield District Council	1.25	2,092	2,092
TOTAL (core)	100	167,360	167,360
Defra (Sustainable Development Fund)	100	23,069	13,069*
Defra (AONB Projects)	100	0	12,080*
TOTAL budget		£190,429	£192,509

*The funding received from Defra for 2020/21 is £150,699, which represents an increase of £2,080 from the £148,589 received for 2019/20.

4.3. Expenditure for 2019-21 is:

2019-20		2020-21	
Core item	Predicted outturn 2019/20 £	Core item	Budget 2020/21 £
Staff salaries and associated costs	112,488.03	Staff salaries and associated costs	135,620

Office equipment	2,104	Office equipment	2,600
Annual audit	400	Annual audit	400
Volunteer costs	0	Volunteer costs	500
NAAONB membership	2,619	National liaison	3,000
Print and publicity	815	Print and publicity	5,000
Partnership running costs	9,000	Partnership running costs	9,000
AONB website	7,800	AONB website	0*
Annual Conference	1,781	Annual Conference	2,000
Monitoring	0	Core activity (incl monitoring, community involvement)	9,240
Community involvement	0		
Core activity	29,655		
Core expenditure sub-total	166,662		167,360
Sustainable Development Fund	18,943		£13,069
AONB Projects	0		£12,080
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£185,605		£192,509
	Variation -£4,824		

*Hosting and support for the AONB website is being funded for 3 years (2020-2023) out of the 2019/20 budget.

5. Sustainable Development Fund

5.1. In 2019/20 six projects were approved, amounting to £16,636 grants awarded in total. Offers were also made to two other projects, but applicants withdrew their applications late in the financial year. After the administration fee earned by the AONB Unit of £2,307 is deducted from the SDF Grant this leaves a balance of £4,126 unallocated.

March 2020	Budget	Spent or Committed to Date	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects				
Longdon Parish Council - Information Boards	700	0	700	0
Love Cannock Chase - Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles	1,250	0	1,250	0
Beaudesert Care Farm CIC - Beaudesert Eco Arts Trails	4,828	4,828	4,828	0
Chelmarsh Ringing Group - Bird Boxes	1,498	1,497	1,498	-1
Brereton and Ravenhill PC - Information board	500	500	500	0
National Trust, Shugborough – Parkland Planting Programme	7,861	0	7,861	0
Approved Projects Total	16,637	6,825	16,636	-1
Admin Fees	2,307	2,307	2,307	0
Unallocated	4,125	4,125	0	-4,125
TOTAL	23,069	9,132	18,943	-4,126

5.2 In 2020/21 the amount allocated to the SDF is going to be reduced to £13,069, and the remainder reallocated for use for matched funding for AONB project development (increasing this amount from £10,000 to £12,080)

6. Utilisation of AONB Reserve

6.1. With the reorganisation of the AONB Partnership and recruitment of a new AONB team from 2017-19 the budget was not fully utilised during this period and (with Defra approval) funds have been held in reserve to allow delivery of the new AONB Management Plan from 2019. The following table outlines how the AONB reserve has been utilised for this purpose. Additional information about each of the activities is given in section 2 above. All underspend monies had to be spent by 31 March 2020.

Activity	Budget estimate £	Actual Cost committed £	Predicted Outturn £	Task & Finish Group
Planning guidance - setting / views	20,000	23,998	23,998	LP
Planning guidance - design	15,000	22,770	22,770	LP
Chase through Time legacy project development	7,500	17,783	17,783	HE
Online e-learning tool and promotional materials for Love Cannock Chase campaign	3,000	2,000	2,000	VM
Heathland restoration feasibility study	7,500	7,500	7,500	LM
Local wildlife sites survey	25,000	24,750	18,250	LM
Crayfish survey	5,000	6,300	6,300	LM
Nightjar survey	6,000	2,500	2,268	LM
Long-eared Owl survey	600	0	Deferred to 20/21	LM
Collation of invertebrate data	3,000	0	Deferred to 20/21	LM
Collation of bat data	4,000	0	Deferred to 20/21	LM
SUBTOTAL	96,600	108,101	100,869	
Survey of geological sites in AONB	500	500	500	LM
REVISED TOTAL	97,100	108,601	101,369	

6.2. Most of the items in the Underspend Plan have been delivered. For various reasons it was not possible to deliver the long-eared owl survey, collation of invertebrate data and collation of bat data, and these have been deferred for re-consideration in 2020/21.

6.3. The position of the Underspend projects at mid-March 2020 is for a predicted outturn of £101,369 (against a budget estimate of £97,100). This small overspend (£4,269) will be covered by utilising the AONB's Core and Action Projects budget for the current financial year

7. Project development 2020-21

7.1. The table in 2.1 above proposes a wide range of activities for 2020/21. At this stage, a number are outline proposals, and further work is needed to estimate their likely costs and means of delivery. Whilst some can be delivered from the AONB core expenditure, other activities will require additional funding from the AONB reserve or from external funding resources. This will become clear as the development work proceeds.

7.2. Match contributions for funding bids may be required and it is proposed that some of the single pot is allocated for this purpose, together with the reallocated portion of the SDF described in 5.2.

7.3. The following table highlights the main projects proposed for development in 2020-21, and indicates where they can be funded from AONB core expenditure, and those instances where additional, external resources will be required.

No.	Activity	Budget estimate £	AONB core expenditure	Additional, external resources required
4	Local arts initiatives	Unknown		✓
9	Chase through time legacy project	Unknown		✓
10	Nature Recovery Plan for Cannock Chase AONB	Unknown		✓
12	Heathland / forestry land exchange	Unknown		✓
19 / 20	AONB communications implementation	Unknown	✓	✓
20	Cannock Chase place brand implementation	Unknown	✓	✓
23	Poetry walks and workshops	250	✓	
24	Poetry anthology project	600	✓	
25	Library resource pack	5,000	✓	
35	Woodland Local Wildlife Sites survey	4,000	✓	
36	White Claw Crayfish recovery	500	✓	
36	Nightjar survey Phase 2	2,500	✓	
36	Collation of invertebrate data	3,000		✓
36	Collation of bat data	4,000		✓
36	Long-eared owl survey	500	✓	

43	Understanding engagement with under-represented groups	£5,000		✓
43	Review and conclude AONB Interpretation Strategy	10,000		✓
45	Sustainable travel interpretation totems and posters at train stations	25,000		✓

Appendix 1. Cannock Chase AONB Partnership Risk Register (revised and updated March 2020)

Topic	Key Risks	Potential Impact	Mitigation	Remaining Risk
Coronavirus	<p>Loss of staff capacity due to ill health and/or isolation.</p> <p>Loss of volunteer capacity</p> <p>Restrictions for containment, and advice on gatherings and travel may impact on normal working practices, meetings etc.</p>	Impact on delivery of the AONB Programme	<p>Monitor situation and respond to Government advice.</p> <p>Provide support for staff who become ill or are isolated.</p> <p>Cancel gatherings.</p> <p>Implement distancing strategy (working from home / meetings via video / tele-conferencing). (NB. All staff are already equipped to work remotely as required).</p>	Medium
Staffing	Loss of capacity due to long term ill health	Impact on delivery of the AONB programme	Risk assessments in place including stress risk; staff support measures in place; resilience training available; absence management policy in place	Medium
	Failure / delay in recruiting new posts	Impact on delivery of the AONB programme	Adverts widely promoted; all staff recruited so high priority tasks can be addressed.	Low
Contractors	Inadequate performance; failure to deliver outputs and outcomes	Impact on delivery of the AONB programme; reputational risk	Compliance with SCC Procurement and contract management rules; involvement of partners to monitor contract delivery	Low
Funding / finances	Loss of core funding for unit	Impact on delivery of the AONB programme; potential impacts on staff posts which could have	Defra funding confirmed to 2020; partnership agreement in place for local authority contributions.	Medium

		financial implications e.g. redundancy costs		
	Failure to secure wider funding for delivery	Impact on delivery of AONB programme	Development officer post will bring expertise in funding; CIO development will over time provide access to broader funding base	Medium
	Financial mismanagement	Loss of funds; failure to comply with grant requirements; penalties	Regular external audits undertaken; managed through council systems with appropriate procedures in place	Low
Partnership	Loss of partner support	Impact on delivery of programme as work hinges on positive relations and input from others	New structure supports positive engagement by partners in delivery and development of projects	Medium
	Inadequate support for volunteers	Impact on delivery of AONB Programme; loss of volunteers; loss of reputation	Support processes for volunteers in place and regularly monitored	Low
Office Accommodation	Temporary loss of access to office accommodation e.g. fire etc.	Disruption to delivery	Office safety procedures in place to reduce risks; Flexible working in place so that staff can work from different offices and touch-down centres; systems backed up	Low
Communication	Fragmented, confused and mixed messages; lack of awareness of AONB purpose and activities; out of date and inaccurate information	Unrealistic expectations from partners and public; loss of reputation; disjointed and ineffectual effort	Communications review and strategy in preparation, leading to greater collaboration, raised awareness of conservation issues, and changes to people's behaviour	Medium

Information and Data Management	Breach of security or failure to comply with GDPR	Potential legal implications and loss of trust	Sensitive data is minimal for AONB work; systems, procedures and training in place via host authority	Low
	Loss of data	Impact on delivery	Backup systems in place to minimise risks;	Low

Appendix 2. DEFRA-AONB funded activities

Background/purpose of the Grant

The purpose of the Grant is to enable the Grant Recipient, pursuant to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and other applicable legislation to initiate and carry out activities (including any specific projects or programmes) that are consistent with its statutory duties and reasonably required to achieve its statutory purposes and in the exercise of its relevant powers and functions, taking into account the following:

Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides for the adoption, publication and review of AONB management plans and other types of plan the purpose of which is to define how the purposes and functions of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are to be achieved.

The Defra grant to AONB partnerships and Conservation Boards is a financial contribution to projects, programmes and other activities in support of, inter alia, the defined purposes of the AONB designation, the provisions of the CRoW Act, the defined functions of an AONB Unit, the defined statutory purposes and duties of the Conservation Boards and the locally determined priorities for the AONB as described in the AONB Management Plan, supporting documents and as determined by the Local Joint Advisory, Joint Committee or Conservation Board.

Funded Activities

The Funded Activities are activities which enable the Grant Recipient to comply with its obligations in accordance with the Law, including supporting the purposes for which the AONB was designated, the statutory purposes and duty given to the Conservation Boards and the activities and policies set out in the Management Plan, supporting documents and as determined by the Local Joint Advisory, Joint Committee or Conservation Board from time to time.

Core functions of an AONB staff unit

Core functions of an AONB staff unit
a) Developing reviewing, preparing and publishing the AONB vision and the CRow Act AONB Management Plan
b) Promoting the AONB vision and management plan to help distinguish the AONB from adjacent countryside
c) Advising upon, facilitating and co-ordinating implementation by others of the Management Plan
d) Advising Local Authorities on their activities within AONBs, to encourage them to go beyond normal levels of service (attain the highest possible standards) in countryside management
e) Monitoring and reporting on progress against AONB Management Plan targets
f) Monitoring AONB landscape condition
g) Accessing resources for management activities
h) Working with and contributing to the NAAONB activities, sharing advice and best practice nationally and regionally
i) Providing a management role to co-ordinate AONB protection through the actions of the AONB unit, the AONB partnership and other partners at a local and strategic level
j) Developing an involvement by the community in the management of the AONB
k) Providing landscape related planning advice

Item 5- Report of the AONB Landscape Planning Officer:**a) Development control and Planning Policy****b) High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2a****c) Planning Protocol**

Item for: Part a): Information

Part b): Information

Part c): Discussion and Agreement

Author: Julia Banbury, AONB Landscape Planning Officer

Financial implications: None

Recommendations

1. The Joint Committee notes progress made on planning matters since the last meeting, as shown below
2. Members to note the progress of the work of the local group on High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2a
3. The Joint Committee agrees the adoption of the Updated Planning Protocol 2019

Item a) Development management and Planning Policy

Since December 2019 the Landscape Planning Officer has reviewed 39 applications, of which 16 required no comment. The table below shows the comments made on planning applications, policy documents and any related planning issues. At the time of writing there are two consultations open for Stafford Borough Council, the responses of which will be reported to the July Joint Committee. The information is presented in summary form, but the full responses are available from the AONB Landscape Planning Officer

Category	Summary of response	Outcome/notes
Planning Application		
CH/19/360 Bellscale How, Chapel Lane, Cannock Wood Demolition of bungalow and replacement	The proposed wall and gates would suburbanise influence on local character. There is also potential for impact on trees.	16.12.19 refused
CH/19/376 58 Park Gate Road, Cannock Wood New decking pergola, lighting conservatory doors	Car park extension and lighting is a concern Should be supported by a landscape scheme	See later entry

19/00519/FUL Church Farm, Church Lane Hatherton 2 agricultural buildings	Potential for detrimental impact on views from Shoal Hill. If approved request mitigation to reduce impacts: vehicle movements would be screened when viewed from the AONB; landscape mitigation	Awaiting decision
CH/19/385 58 Park Gate Road, Cannock Wood Signs, illuminated and non illuminated	Sought retention of the traditional brick façade on the gable end and main façade, which would be visible in the wider landscape. Floodlighting at the top of the gable end should be resisted as it would also be more widely visible and detract from the special qualities of the AONB.	See later entry
19/31484/FUL Wolseley Coach House Main Road Wolseley Bridge External alterations for previously approved change of use to 2 dwellings	Mindful that proposal is improvement on the current situation. Hedgerow retention is essential in this location	Approved 10.02.20 with conditions
CH/19/173 Hill Farm, 84, Hayfield Hill, Cannock Wood Change of Use to light industrial (B1) and the retention of the fork lift truck store *AMENDED	Boundary now omits the pasture field. Objection withdrawn A scheme of landscape mitigation is recommended, as space permits	Awaiting decision
CH/19/412 Birchwood Manor, Penkridge Bank Road Replacement front boundary walls and railings	Ornamental finials and gold accenting on railings are suburban character therefore inappropriate.	Awaiting decision
CH/19/413 Court Bank Farm, Slang Lane Variation to allow storage of tractor	Objection withdrawn following further information	Approved 05.02.20
CH/19/419 1 Buds Road, Cannock Wood	Objection: Substantial extension that would increase the dominance of an isolated,	Approved 23.01.20 Landscape condition. Permitted

2 storey extension	elevated property. Would require landscape mitigation.	development rights removed
CH/19/156 The Stonehouse, Penkridge Bank Road, Rugeley, WS15 2UE Amended plans	Amendments welcomed.	Awaiting decision
CH/19/426 Land off Brindley Heath Road, Hednesford Construction of 2 bed bungalow	Previous objection to application CH/18/373, on the grounds of the harm that would be caused to the AONB (and Green Belt) through intensification of development on the site. Position unchanged.	Awaiting decision
CH/19/428 Perth House, Ironstone Road, Cannock New boundary fence, new retaining wall	Objection due to visual impact, inappropriate materials, impact on trees. Site meeting with applicant and case officer to discuss potential solutions	Awaiting amended application
19/31624/HOU Brackenwood, Brook Lane Brocton Removal of conservatory and extension	Request amendments to break up the perceived extent of render and reduce visual impact	See later entry
19/01723/FUH Crangleford, Lower Way, Upper Longdon Extension to detached garage	Tree removal would affect integrity of hedge and screening with detrimental impact. Effects on character of the frontage would need to be minimised.	Refused 11.02.19
19/00908/FUL West Wing Shore Croft Sandy Lane Hatherton New access track	Seek reduction in visual impact of development, landscape mitigation and assurances regarding highway visibility splay not impacting on trees. Amended plans subsequently submitted are appropriate	Awaiting decision
CH/20/0176 Henley Grange, Etchinghill Single Storey side extension Resubmission of CH/19/167	materials sympathetic to the existing building would be appropriate. Retention of trees is welcomed, landscape scheme recommended	Awaiting decision

CH/19/395 White Gables, Kingsley Wood Road Retention of Swimming pool and enclosure, Additional Information	The upper elevations of the proposal would be visible above the boundary hedge with negative impact on the AONB,	Approved 05.02.20
CH/20/022 Upper Birches Farm, Hednesford Road, Rugeley Barn conversion demolition of existing dwelling and the erection of two new dwellings	Straddles AONB boundary. Proposed barn conversion is sympathetic in character and offers useful reuse of a redundant building that partly falls within the AONB. New build is in the immediate vicinity of the AONB and in a vernacular style. Materials for areas of external circulation would be expected to be sympathetic to the rural character of the AONB and not introduce large areas of tarmac. Stonger structural planting and additional tree planting would help buffer the urban edge on the AONB Boundary and mitigate for potential views from nearby more elevated locations.	Awaiting decision
19/31624/HOU Brackenwood, Brook Lane Brocton Removal of conservatory and extension Amended	Objection to car port close to the site boundary and extensive area of hardstanding unsympathetic to the character of the properties in the village and excessive to requirements of a residential property. (Subsequently amended to be acceptable). A landscape scheme recommended.	Approved 18.02.20
CH/19/376 58 Park Gate Road, Cannock Wood New decking pergola, lighting conservatory doors Amended Plans	Strongly objection to the flood light on gable end. Landscape scheme required to include replacement tree planting	13.02.20 approved with conditions
CH/19/385 58 Park Gate Road, Cannock Wood Signs, illuminated and non illuminated Amended Plans	Retention of the traditional brick façade on the gable end welcomed. floodlighting at the apex of the gable end remains a concern	13.02.20 approved with conditions

CH/20/029 Land Off Colliery Road, Brereton Stable building and horse exercise area	Development would have a detrimental effect on the character of the AONB	Awaiting decision
19/01657/FUH Red Hill Cottage, Bardy Lane Upper Longdon Extension of cottage and barn and landscape maintenance store	Conditions recommended to ensure that materials would not be reflective; for seed mix for the green roof, and landscape scheme to mitigate for views of parking and filter views towards the development from Bardy Lane.	Awaiting decision
20/31955/ADV Dora Rose, Milford 2 x adverts on stone plinth	Objection signage is visually intrusive and suburban character not appropriate to the AONB. Up lighting inappropriate to the special qualities and local character	

Item b) High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2a

1. Members will recall the item discussed at the Joint Committee meeting in December 2019 setting out the progress of the Trent Sow Parklands and Cannock Chase AONB HS2 Group (Trent Sow Parklands Group), highlighting progress on the production of the Trent Sow Parklands and Cannock Chase AONB HS2 Design Principles. The Joint Committee resolved to give delegated authority to Officers to sign off final document on behalf of the AONB Partnership, with copies to be emailed to Members for information.
2. The Final Document was duly circulated and full support from Officers Working Group and Elected Members received. The AONB Landscape Planning Officer subsequently reported to the Trent Sow Parklands Group that the Principles were endorsed by the AONB Partnership, and at the Group's meeting on 26th February the Design Principles were formally handed over to HS2.
3. The AONB will be hosting web pages for the Trent Sow Parklands Group on our website. Pages will include a summary of the role of the Group with Terms of Reference. The Design Principles will be available to download from the website and the AONB has requested 2 hard copies of the Design Principles.
4. The second element of the Group's remit is in supporting delivery of a package of Environmental Enhancements outside the Hybrid Bill Limits. The Project Manager has met representatives from National Heritage Lottery Fund to discuss the potential for a funding bid to add value to the proposed enhancements. The Group has welcomed this proposal and authorised the Project Manager to submit an expression of interest.
5. The Group also has an agreed role in providing advice and response on certain elements of HS2's emergent designs, including Great Haywood Viaduct; Ingestre Green Overbridge; landscape earthworks; design of balancing ponds/attenuation

features; and planting design. This element of work will take place after Royal Ascent and appointment of contractors.

Item c) Planning Protocol

1. The need to update the Planning Protocol was referred to the Joint Committee and the Officer Working Group in 2017. Consultation has taken place with planning officers from Local Authority partners through the Landscape and Planning Task and Finish Group, to review and agree an updated protocol.
2. An updated Planning Protocol was discussed at Joint Committee in December 2019 when members requested amendments to include reference to climate change and sustainability and to reconsult with local authority planning officers. Following that work members are invited to agree adoption of the 2019
3. In summary updated Planning Protocol incorporates the following main changes:
 - a. Reflects changes in national legislation and guidance,
 - b. Reflects changes in the local planning policy context, including development of Neighbourhood Plans.
 - c. Consultation topics are set out in a clear structure
 - d. Minimum size of residential development is retained at 5 dwellings. Retained as the landscape character and settlement pattern of the AONB could be adversely affected if the threshold for consultation is increased.
 - e. Removed consultation on agricultural prior notifications, as there are limited considerations Local Planning Authorities can take into account on such applications and therefore it is unlikely their concerns could be taken into account in determining these prior notifications.
 - f. Prior notifications for conversion of redundant farm buildings or change of use will only be considered where design or external appearance form part of the prior approval process.
 - g. Wording on consultation on enforcement reinforces opportunities for AONB support
 - h. New section on Other Matters for Consultation seeking closer working in relation to major infrastructure projects that could affect the AONB and collaborative approach on policy and strategies relating to the SAC.
 - i. Includes reference to climate change and sustainability

CANNOCK CHASE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) PARTNERSHIP

**PLANNING PROTOCOL BETWEEN
CONSTITUENT LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES
AND THE CANNOCK CHASE AONB
JOINT COMMITTEE**

2005 (Updated 2019)



PLANNING PROTOCOL BETWEEN CONSTITUENT LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES AND THE CANNOCK CHASE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT COMMITTEE

1 Aims

1 To provide the opportunity for the Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee to comment on planning applications (as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015), the preparation of development plans (including Neighbourhood Plans) and related land use, spatial planning and transport planning documents (including relevant plans and strategies for the Special Area of Conservation – SAC) on behalf of the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership.

2 To provide a formal procedure/communication between the Local Planning Authority partners within the AONB and the AONB Joint Committee on planning matters within and adjoining or directly affecting, the AONB. (The AONB Landscape Planning Officer will look at the weekly lists and either ask to be consulted or submit comments but ensuring that the Unit is properly resourced to comment in a reasonable timeframe, noting that there will be referrals which do not need AONB comment).

3. The protocol sets out how the AONB Joint Committee and Local Planning Authority Partners in the AONB Partnership will consider planning matters affecting the AONB.

2 Scope

2.1 It covers the following issues:-

- The development plan and other spatial/land use policy work of local authorities which the Joint Committee wishes to be involved in.
- The planning applications it wishes to have the opportunity to make comment on.
- The broad priorities and criteria that the Joint Committee will apply in coming to its view.
- How the view of the Joint Committee will be arrived at, including streamlined delegation arrangements and how it will be conveyed to the relevant planning authority.
- The practical responsibilities of the relevant planning authority, in terms of consultation, reporting and monitoring.

3 The Need to Consult the AONB Joint Committee

The AONB is a national designation which seeks to protect the landscape and natural beauty of an area of finest countryside. The size and location of the Cannock Chase AONB means

that it is vulnerable to development pressures. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a general duty on public bodies in the following terms:

“In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”.

3.2 The publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2018 reinforced the status and importance of protected area, including National Parks and AONBs.

Paragraph 170 states: *“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);’

Paragraph 172 states: *“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:*

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.’

3.3 Consequently, there is a need for consistency in the Local Planning Authorities’ approach to dealing with planning issues, both in terms of policy formulation and dealing with planning applications. There is also a need for an AONB ‘voice’ to be able to make a positive contribution towards planning decisions which affect the AONB.

3.4 Within the broad context of helping to protect the AONB, the Partnership Agreement (December 2003) defines one of the functions of the Joint Committee as follows: *“to consider and make representations on Development Plan Policies and Proposals and proposals for development affecting Cannock Chase AONB.”* (para. 3.3.7). Reflecting the approach taken in Management Plans since 2004, the most recent Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019 - 2024 contains the following Vision Statement: -

“By 2039, the landscapes, habitats and heritage of Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be in good condition through positive management, with standards and facilities befitting their national and international importance. There will be high levels of connectivity between the AONB and its surrounds through its landscapes, habitats, heritage and cultural landscapes and communities. The natural benefits of the AONB will have a positive impact on those who experience and enjoy the Chase whether from local communities or further afield and these communities will in turn care for, feel pride in and celebrate the AONB.”

3.5 In order to achieve that Vision, it will be necessary for Development Plan Policies, related Supplementary Planning Documents, subsequent planning decisions and the design of major infrastructure projects (for example HS2), to complement the role of the Management Plan in setting out policies to protect and enhance this important landscape in decision making, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4 Revision and Review

4.1 This protocol is a working document and may be subject to further discussion and review as considered necessary. The current review is based on the following needs:

- To reflect changes in national legislation and guidance, for example: The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance.
- To reflect changes in the local planning policy context, for example: the adoption of new Local Plans and the making of several Neighbourhood Plans.
- To reflect the need to recognise the shrinking resources available to both the AONB unit and local planning authorities, to focus time and effort on applications which may have the greatest impact on the AONB.

5 The Role of the AONB in Planning Matters

5.1 The Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee is a consultee on planning matters, not a decision maker. Decisions on planning matters will remain with the relevant planning authorities:

- Cannock Chase Council
- Lichfield District Council
- South Staffordshire Council
- Stafford Borough Council
- Staffordshire County Council

Consultations on Development Plans and Other Planning Policy

5.2 The AONB Joint Committee will be a consultee in the preparation of Development Plan documents (including Neighbourhood Plans) and related land use and spatial planning policy documents, including Supplementary Planning Documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance, affecting* all or part of the AONB and its setting. (*Affecting means directly affecting, in that the policy relates to land or areas within the AONB itself, or indirectly, in that it relates to land or areas which are contiguous with or can be seen from the AONB or where the policy or application is of such a nature that it might undermine the quality or purposes of the AONB). Consultation may occur at several relevant stages of the same document. It is noted that, to fulfil the consultation requirement on Neighbourhood Plans, Parish and Town Councils and Neighbourhood Forums will need to be made aware of the Protocol, but they will not necessarily need to formally sign up to it.

5.3 Consultations will be carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation and the Statements of Community Involvement prepared by the Local Planning Authorities.

6 Consultation on Planning Applications

6.1 There is the need to consult the Joint Committee on planning applications: -

- Which give rise to concerns or raise issues contrary to AONB Management Plan policy for the AONB.
- Are likely to have an adverse impact on either the character of the local landscape and/or its scenic beauty, nature conservation interests within the AONB or on its setting.

6.2 This includes applications relating to land within the AONB itself and land which is contiguous with or can be seen from the AONB or where the application is of such a nature that it might undermine the quality or purposes of the AONB. The AONB Joint Committee will be consulted on the following categories of planning applications within the AONB or in its setting:

Residential development:

- Applications proposing the development of 5 dwellings or more, including changes of use to residential, within existing settlements defined within the relevant development plans.
- Any applications or prior notifications for a single dwelling or more or changes of use to form dwellings in the open countryside (i.e. outside of a settlement).
- Outside the AONB, applications for urban extensions that might affect the setting of the AONB.

Non-residential applications including recreation and outdoor sporting facilities

- Applications for the use of land or buildings for recreational purposes, including tourist accommodation (caravans, camping and the provision of self-catering and other holiday accommodation), the formation of lakes, ponds and other significant landscape features
- Equestrian related developments.
- Agricultural and horticultural developments on individual land holdings, for example, the construction of new storage facilities
- Applications for the conversion of redundant farm buildings, change of use of land or buildings.

Other major development

- Applications for non-residential / businesses,

Minerals and Waste disposal

- Applications proposing new or extended operational areas for mineral workings or waste disposal, the restoration of old or existing workings, applications to vary or rescind conditions relating thereto.

Utilities and other infrastructure

- Applications for utilities and other infrastructure, including renewable energy development, telecommunications towers, aerals and extension to existing aerals.
- Proposals for any structures that would be visible over a wide area of AONB and/or the surrounding area.

Other development Proposals

- Other proposals for development including changes of use which by virtue of their particular characteristics are likely to have an adverse effect on the landscape character and scenic beauty of the AONB and its setting / or set a precedent.
- Applications where the case officer and the AONB Landscape Planning Officer agree it appropriate for the AONB to be consulted.

6.3 The AONB Partnership should be consulted on enforcement matters and planning appeals related to cases upon which comments have been made at an earlier stage, providing the opportunity to support the Local Planning Authority.

6.4 Major development, as defined in guidance and legislation, should necessitate mandatory consultation with the AONB unit. It is recognised that other types and scales of development should involve the AONB unit where the Local Planning Authority (i.e. the case officer) request a comment from the AONB and it is the intention of this Protocol to inform such decisions.

7 Other Matters for Consultation

7.1 There will be some proposals for development that fall outside the remit of the Local Planning Authorities, for example national infrastructure projects such as HS2. It is hoped

that the relevant agencies, whilst not signatory to this Protocol, will be aware of the need to engage with the AONB partnership on the documents/projects for which they are responsible. However, the local authority partners will themselves be consultees on such projects and they can use this protocol to invite comments from the AONB Partnership to inform their own consultation responses, for example: -

- The AONB Partnership should be consulted on the planning and delivery of major infrastructure projects (e.g. concerning road and rail transport, power generation and transmission and the provision of utility services) which are within, adjoining/in the setting of the designated area or will be visible from it.

7.2 The AONB partnership will continue to work effectively and collaboratively with the SAC Partnership and should be consulted on policy documents, strategies and management plans for the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation.

8 AONB Criteria

8.1 In considering both policy development and individual planning applications, the Joint Committee's main concern will be the purpose of statutory designation of the AONB, that is, conserving landscape and scenic beauty, reflecting The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) which requires all relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs when performing their functions. However, in forming a view it will also bear in mind the economic and social needs of local communities, recognising the role of existing agriculture, forestry and other rural industries. It will also consider transport and recreational issues as they impact on the AONB and issues of sustainability and climate change. Consultation responses will refer to AONB evidence and studies, rather than opinions, to add more detail or factual information to reinforce general Local Plan policy and provide a strong basis for decision making

The Joint Committee will not concern itself with applications or aspects of applications, which it regards as relating solely to the private interests of an individual or group of individuals. That is, the Joint Committee will limit interventions and comments to matters of public concern where there are relevant to the conservation of the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. Even on matters of public interest, it may decide to leave extensive comment to bodies or organisations better placed to provide it. These bodies or organisations may be members of the AONB Partnership who are consulted in their own right.

9 Consultation Procedure

9.1 In practice, this protocol has been used proactively by the local authority partners and the way in which AONB comments are sought through formal consultation on planning applications is welcomed. However:

- The AONB Landscape Planning Officer will check weekly planning applications lists (on the relevant websites).
- The AONB Officer will be able to ask to be consulted on applications which are considered to fall into any of the categories set out in 6.1 and 6.2 (above).
- The AONB Landscape Planning Officer will submit any comments on behalf of the Joint Committee within 21 days of being consulted, or any other appropriate timescale agreed with the case officer.
- LPAs will enter into early discussions with the AONB Landscape Planning Officer if any issues arise.
- If necessary, the AONB Landscape Planning Officer will check on progress made in dealing with the applications.
- The views of the Joint Committee will be determined and made known according to the procedures and scheme of delegations set out in Appendix I.
- Where appropriate, the local planning authority will consider including the AONB Landscape Planning Officer in pre-application discussions or referring the pre-applicant to the role of the AONB Unit, where defined AONB interests are likely to be affected by the proposal or the LPA response to it.

10 Monitoring and Feedback

10.1 The Joint Committee will be given an annual report from the AONB Unit on planning issues, which will include:

- (a) An overall summary of applications made, policy issues raised and of the AONB responses.
- (b) A judgement as to whether the AONB and its designation are being taken proper account of by the relevant local planning authorities.
- (c) A review of how well this protocol is working and suggestions for any improvements considered to be appropriate.

11 AONB Staff and Staffordshire County Council

11.1 Although working on behalf of the AONB partnership, the staff of the AONB Unit are employed by Staffordshire County Council in respect of the terms and conditions of employment and provision of line management. In dealing with planning issues within the AONB, and within the terms of this protocol, the AONB Landscape Officer will be expected to take a view determined by the purposes of designation of the AONB and the policies of

the AONB Management Plan, rather than by the planning or other policies of the County Council, if different.

11.2 The Partnership Agreement, signed by the local planning authority gives the AONB Officer delegated powers as follows: - *“When authorised by the Joint Committee, to represent the Joint Committee on applications on which the Joint Committee has decided to make representations.”*

APPENDIX 1: PROTOCOL & SCHEME OF DELEGATION FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF PLANNING CONSULTATIONS BY THE AONB JOINT COMMITTEE

Executive Committee Decision Making

The time constraints on making consultation responses, particularly with regard to planning applications, dictate expeditious procedures. The AONB Joint Committee recognised, based on the experience of implementing the existing Protocol over several years, that it does not/is not able to consider most consultations at its full meetings. At that time, to help discharge its consultation functions The Joint Committee constituted a standing committee termed the “Planning Sub-Group” to which it delegated responsibility for considering and deciding on formal consultations on planning policy matters and planning applications falling within the terms of the protocol. The AONB Joint Committee decided on the composition of this Sub-Group and its chair annually. The Group was to be convened at the request of the AONB Landscape Planning Officer at a minimum of 3 days’ notice.

In practice, The Sub-Group has worked via e-mail rather than meeting in person. If meetings were necessary, the Sub-Group was deemed quorate if two members and the AONB Officer attended.

It is proposed, within the terms of this revised Protocol that all Sub-Group meetings will be “Virtual” and undertaken by email, unless exceptional circumstances, in terms of the scale or contentious nature of an application or Development Plan matter dictate otherwise. The Sub-Group will be deemed to quorate if two AONB representatives (either Joint Committee members or officers from the Officer Working Group) and the AONB Landscape Planning Officer are involved. Where consultation gives rise to an issue of very major significance, the Sub-Group will continue to refer it with a recommendation to the full Joint Committee for a final decision. All other consultations on planning applications will be dealt with by the AONB Landscape Planning Officer under a scheme of delegation.

Scheme of delegation to the AONB Manager (planning applications)

The Joint Committee delegates to the AONB Landscape Planning Officer the responsibility for deciding whether a consultation warrants a response on behalf of the Joint Committee and day-to-day responsibility for deciding which consultations are referred to the Sub-Group. In general, the Sub-Group will expect to be consulted on the proposed responses of the AONB Officer to applications giving rise either to:

- i - a significant issues(s) of principle or policy for the AONB, or
- ii - likely to have a significant adverse impact on either the landscape and scenic beauty of the local area or the AONB as a whole, including its setting.

The Joint Committee delegates to the AONB Landscape Planning Officer the responsibility for making a consultation response on its behalf for those consultations not referred to the Sub-Group and for consultations which are agreed by the Sub-Group when it has been convened. In discharging these duties the AONB Landscape Planning Officer will take full account of the outcomes of any consideration of matters by the Sub-Group. When the Sub Group has been convened, the identity of the officers involved will be recorded in the regular/annual monitoring reports on planning activity to the Joint Committee.

AONB Unit Office Procedures

- All formal consultations shall be received and logged by the AONB Unit.
- The AONB Landscape Planning Officer will endeavour to ensure that all responses are made within the period set for consultations (e.g. for planning applications, usually 21 days, unless otherwise agreed by the relevant officer or authority).
- All formal consultation responses on behalf of the Joint Committee will be issued and signed by the AONB Landscape Planning Officer on behalf of the Joint Committee.
- The AONB Unit will keep a public record of all consultation responses on planning matters made by the Joint Committee.

Item 6 - Report of the AONB Landscape Planning Officer

Planning guidance – building design

Item for:	Information
Author:	Julia Banbury, AONB Landscape Planning Officer
Financial implications:	None
Recommendations	That progress on the preparation of planning guidance for building design is noted.

Background

- 1 Cannock Chase holds the AONB designation because of its outstanding and nationally important landscape character and quality. The AONB is defined and shaped by a variety of different land uses, which together create a unique patchwork landscape with contrasting textures and colours. The different landscape elements include the inspiring views and open prospect to and from the high heathland plateau; the secluded and 'secret' valleys and tracks in the forested areas; and the pattern of small fields, farmsteads and parkland along the northern and eastern edges of the Chase. The wild and tranquil character of the Chase as a whole contrasts with the increasingly busy towns, conurbations and countryside that surround it.
- 2 There will be a continuing demand for new development and alterations and additions to existing buildings in, and in proximity to, the Chase. The AONB Management Plan 2019-24 makes clear that development should be of the highest quality design and environmental standards, respect local distinctiveness, be complementary in form and scale with their surroundings and take opportunities to enhance their setting.
- 3 The AONB Partnership has commissioned two major planning guidance documents to support the landscape policies of the AONB Management Plan and aid developers, architects and decision-makers: the first on appropriate high-quality design in the AONB and the second on views and the setting of the AONB. This report deals with the design guidance. Guidance on views and setting will be reported to the Joint Committee at a later date.

Purpose of the guidance

- 4 Planning consultants FPCR were appointed in November 2019 to produce a Design Guide for the Cannock Chase AONB. The Design Guide aims to give succinct, practical and consistent advice to set clear design expectations for new development within the AONB.

Structure of the guidance

- 5 The Design Guide is being produced in two parts. Part 1 includes an overview of Cannock Chase AONB while Part 2 contains detailed design guidance for development within the AONB. The document is designed so that each of the detailed design guidance chapters can be updated and used separately.

Part 1

- 6 Part 1 of the document has 2 chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to explain the purpose of the document, who it is for, the planning context and explains the status of the document. This section is deliberately brief and cross references existing planning documents etc.
- 7 The second chapter provides baseline information of the AONB. This aims to set the scene for the detailed design guidance and provides short descriptions of the existing landscape character and the built character within the landscape. Buildings and the settlements found within the AONB are described and a number of settlement types are identified and described in detail including a brief colour study of the settlement and the immediate surrounding landscape.

Part 2

- 8 Part 2 includes an initial chapter covering the Overarching Principles of Good Design with further chapters referring to different types of development appropriate for the AONB. A section on Domestic development cross references the settlement types as identified within Part 1 of the document. Other chapters cover Commercial, Employment & Industrial development, Public Realm, Agricultural and Other Rural Development Buildings, Recreation and Leisure Facilities and Stabling and Menages.

Approach

- 9 The emerging document has been developed through consultation with the Steering Group and other stakeholders who have brought specialist expertise from partner organisations. Part 1 was presented at a workshop in December 2019. This outlined the initial findings of the baseline review and identified the sections to be included within the second part of the document.
- 10 A full draft was then presented and discussed at a workshop in February 2020 including a draft AONB Colour Palette appendix, informed by the colour studies included in Part 1.
- 11 Comments on the full draft are being received and collated and will be addressed in the final document.

Outputs

- 12 The final published guidance will help to ensure higher quality and landscape-led design that reflects the intrinsic landscape character of the AONB, and is embedded with a true sense of place, without stifling innovation and creativity.
- 13 Following approval by the Joint Committee later in the year, it is intended that the Design Guide will be promoted on the AONB's website, and circulated to local planning authorities, parish councils and neighbourhood planning groups.. Following on, the AONB would encourage partner local authorities to adopt the guidance as a material consideration in relation to planning policy and the determination of planning applications.

Item 7 - Report of the AONB Development Officer

Proposed land exchange to restore heathland and associated habitats from conifer plantation

Item for:	Information
Author:	Ian Marshall, AONB Development Officer
Financial implications:	None
Recommendations	That progress on the proposed land exchange is noted.

Background

- 1 Cannock Chase is renowned internationally for its areas of lowland heathland. The heathland was formerly much more extensive: afforestation in the first half of the 20th century reduced surviving areas into a number of dispersed fragments. Habitat loss and fragmentation, combined with the cessation of traditional management and modern day pressures from high recreational use, pollution and invasive species, have placed the remaining heathland areas at risk.
- 2 A potential opportunity exists to return some areas of the public forest estate to heathland, if an equivalent area of land for compensation tree planting can be found elsewhere. This would have the effect of consolidating the surviving heathland fragments into a single large block, thereby improving the resilience of the habitat and allowing for more efficient management.
- 3 Enlarging and re-connecting heathland and reintroducing sustainable management regimes is identified as a priority within the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019-24.

Purpose of the project

- 4 RSK ADAS Ltd has been appointed to examine, evaluate and report on the feasibility of a potential land exchange, consistent with the objectives of the AONB Partnership and Forestry England's mission. The exchange would intend to facilitate the reconnection of existing disparate heathland areas on Cannock Chase. This would be achieved by displacing 645 hectares (ha) of commercial forestry. The review focuses on the opportunities and constraints of an exchange, which has been determined by a site investigation, desk research and stakeholder consultation.

Project parameters

- 5 Prior to commission of this work, Forestry England agreed some basic rules for a potential exchange. These rules formed the initial parameters, specifically:
 - Forestry England must be able to harvest the same amount of timber.

- A minimum area of 100 ha was required if the land did not run contiguous to existing Forestry England sites.
- Land within 15km and 30km of Cannock Chase AONB would be the most desirable, followed by the National Forest.

Key Points

6 The following key points have emerged to date:

- Of the 645 ha identified for the potential land transfer, 455 ha is owned by Forestry England and 190 ha is leased. No information has been received on break clauses or the ability to assign.
- Bare land issue 12% not used so could potentially require less land.
- Forestry England sell timber to markets that are non-species specific. As a result, nearly all land in the priority areas would be able to provide the same amount of timber.
- Afforestation of a brownfield site may be preferable but it is unlikely that suitable brownfield land, of appropriate size, would become available.
- Open land in the priority area tends to be used for agricultural purposes and is mostly held by private sector. However, it is not known whether these are owned or tenanted.
- Productive agricultural land used in the area reaches £8,000 - £10,000 per acre (£19,800 – £24,700 per ha). Land suitable for forestry is in demand from the investment sector.
- It is rare that 100ha blocks come onto the market. When they do they tend to be part of larger farm units with commercial buildings. This would artificially raise the price per hectare.
- Purchase price is only one cost associated with this land exchange. The costs of establishing new forestry and ongoing maintenance of the new heathland area need to be considered.
- Costs could be mitigated by taking a phased approach to the project. Waiting until timber is clear-felled before establishing woodland elsewhere would negate establishment costs and spread out purchase costs.
- Limited public sector funding exists for this type of project; however, a partnership approach with pooled finances, such as the model being used to restore Dorset Heaths could be used.
- The withdrawal of agricultural subsidy payments between 2021 and 2027, and the delinking of these from 2022 may affect land prices.
- Evolution of Government policy relating to the climate change, the environment and the future of support payments may affect farmers/ landowners' views on afforestation, which may provide long term lease opportunities.

Outputs

- 7 A feasibility report will be produced for the AONB Partnership describing the adopted methodology, opportunities and constraints, any requirements for technical studies and reports, projection of costs, evaluation, conclusion and recommendations.
- 8 The AONB Partnership together with Forestry England will consider the conclusions and recommendations and decide whether or not to take forward the potential land exchange to the next phase.

Item 8 - Report of the AONB Development Officer

Communications review and strategy

Item for:	Information
Author:	Ian Marshall, AONB Development Officer
Financial implications:	None
Recommendations	<p>That progress on the communications review and strategy is noted.</p> <p>That progress on the development of a place brand for Cannock Chase is noted.</p>

Background

- 1 Joint Committee on 5 December 2019 received a presentation from Cristian Marcucci of Staffordshire County Council's Communications Team on a review of the AONB Partnership's current communications arrangements and recommendations for a future communication strategy.
- 2 Effective, targeted communications can support efforts to raise the profile of the AONB so that people are inspired to want to look after it; increase the transparency of the work of the Partnership; and motivate people to do more to look after this nationally important landscape.

Communications review and strategy - progress

- 3 The review highlights the fundamental changes that are needed to improve Cannock Chase AONB's communication approach, and makes the following recommendations:
 - Greater clarity of purpose – and in particular clarifying and realigning the roles and responsibilities between the AONB Partnership and SAC Partnership.
 - Review resources and options to increase communications capacity.
 - Improve partner/stakeholder communication to keep people better informed and involved.
 - Commission a place branding exercise to create a visual identity and clear and authentic story about the Chase – past, present and future.
 - Establish an AONB communications group to improve co-ordination between communications leads operating across the Chase.
 - Develop digital communications including supporting social media accounts and, in the long-term, a single website for the Chase.
 - Sign up for membership of Destination Staffordshire to work with the Enjoy Staffordshire team to enhance and improve tourist information about Cannock Chase

- 4 A workshop was held on 26 February 2020 to develop the findings of the review and help shape the emerging communications strategy for the AONB. Representatives from 15 organisations discussed:
 - What we want to achieve over the next 12 months from our communication?
 - Who are the key audiences that we want to communicate with?
 - How should we communicate?
 - What will success look like, and how will we know we have been successful?
- 5 The County Council's Communications Team is using the observations and ideas generated from the workshop to inform the preparation of a communications strategy for the AONB Partnership by the end of March 2020. The draft strategy will be shared with partners for comment, before final approval by the Joint Committee.

Development of a place brand for Cannock Chase

- 6 The development of a place brand for Cannock Chase (as recommended in the communications review) is timely as it would underpin a number of significant forthcoming activities around visitor management, business and community engagement and communication. It also improves the Chase's preparedness for the Commonwealth Games in 2022 which offers a golden opportunity to raise the profile of Cannock Chase locally, nationally and internationally.
- 7 By utilising an underspend in this year's AONB budget (which would otherwise have been "lost" and returned to Defra) the opportunity has been taken to commission this important piece of work. Following a competitive procurement process, therefore, FDA Design has been appointed to work with stakeholders and partners to develop the place brand.
- 8 The project is developing an 'umbrella' design styling for visual communications that conveys the message that 'Cannock Chase is a special place'. The design styling will consist of a graphic or typographic logo; supporting text, graphic and photographic imagery; typographic principles; and colour palette. The outputs will include:
 - Brand guidelines setting out the visual identity, key messages and brand narrative.
 - Brand implementation plan setting out costed ideas and priorities.
 - A sense of place toolkit to help businesses "sell" the AONB experience.
 - A new style suite of media that animates the Chase.
- 9 The project will progress in three stages from March 2020. Stakeholders and partners will be involved in the discussions and decision-making throughout.

Stage 1 Research and information gathering

- Desk-top review of relevant documents.
- Familiarisation visits to Cannock Chase and the six visitor centres/hubs.
- Interviews with stakeholders and partners.
- Collection and review of available photographs and proposals for new media.
- Origination of several design ideas and themes for place brand development.
- Progress report summarising the information gathered, key messages, narratives and storylines and presenting a number of initial design ideas for the place brand.
- Presentation and discussion of progress report and initial design ideas at a Visitor Management Task and Finish Group (Friday 3 April).

Stage 2 Place brand development

- Development of final proposals for alternative design themes for the place brand demonstrating the application of the brand to a range of items.
- Presentation and discussion of place brand ideas at a Visitor Management Task and Finish Group at end of April (date tbc).

Stage 3 Final place brand proposals

- Circulation of selected place brand ideas to stakeholders and partners.
- Collective decision as to which place brand design best fits Cannock Chase.
- Development of final brand guidelines, brand implementation plan, and toolkit for stakeholders, partners and local businesses.
- Recommendations of Visitor Management Task and Finish Group and presentation of place brand proposals to Joint Committee for approval.

- 10 Following approval by the Joint Committee, the place brand guidelines will be circulated to the 80 or so stakeholders, partners, individuals and organisations who make up the AONB partnership.
- 11 The AONB Unit, working with the AONB Partnership, will begin the process of implementing the place brand from the second half of 2020, applying the identity to websites, social media, leaflets, posters and other publicity, signage and interpretation.
- 12 Stakeholders and partners will be invited to adopt the place brand, and advice will be given as to how best to integrate the 'umbrella' brand alongside the existing identities of the different organisations.