



**Cannock Chase AONB Partnership  
Meeting of the Joint Committee  
Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at 10.00 AM  
To be held remotely via Microsoft Teams**

Please note this agenda includes a Part 2 item where members of the public and press may be asked to leave the meeting.

Members of the public wishing to observe this meeting should contact [cannockchase@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:cannockchase@staffordshire.gov.uk) to be given access information

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	(e) Undergrounding		
12	<b>Any other business</b>		
13	<b>Date, time and venue of next meeting</b> March 2020, July 2020 (AGM), December 2020		
	<b>Exclusion of the Public and Press</b> The Chairman to move: "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"  <b>Part Two</b> (All reports in this section are exempt)		
14	<b>Running of AONB Joint Committee meetings</b> Report of the AONB Development Officer	DECISION	

### Item 3

## Minutes of the meeting of the AONB Joint Committee held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Item for: Approval

### 1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

- 1.1 The election of Chair and Vice-Chair for the next 12 months was overseen by John Rowe, Honorary Secretary of the Joint Committee
- 1.2 A call for nominations of chair was made. Cllr Bates nominated Cllr Frances Beatty to be appointed as Chair for the next 12 Months. Cllr Heath seconded the proposal. No further nominations were received. A vote was then taken on the nomination of Cllr Frances Beatty to be appointed as Chair for the next 12 Months.
- 1.3 **Resolved:**  
**That Councillor Frances Beatty is appointed Chair of the AONB Joint Committee for the next 12 months.**
- 1.4 A call for nominations for vice-chair was made. Cllr Beatty nominated Cllr Len Bates to be appointed as vice-chair for the next 12 Months. Councillor Heath seconded the proposal. No further nominations were received. A vote was then taken on the nomination of Cllr Len Bates to be appointed as vice-chair for the next 12 Months.
- 1.5 **Resolved:**  
**That Councillor Len Bates is appointed Vice-chair of the AONB Joint Committee for the next 12 months.**

### 2. Welcome and introductions

- 2.1 FB extended welcome to Committee members and to those who are not members of the Committee.

#### **Members present**

Cllr Frances Beatty  
Cllr Len Bates  
Cllr Gill Heath  
Ian Marshall  
Richard Harris  
Julia Banbury  
Glenn Watson  
Janene Cox

Anthony Humphreys  
John Rowe  
Hazel McDowall  
Mike Shurmer  
Roger Broadbent  
Stephen Stray

#### **Representing**

Stafford Borough Council  
South Staffordshire Borough Council  
Staffordshire County Council  
AONB Unit  
AONB Unit  
AONB Unit  
Cannock Chase Council  
Staffordshire County Council (part of meeting)  
Staffordshire County Council  
Staffordshire County Council  
Natural England  
RSPB  
West Midland Bird Club  
Lichfield District Council

#### **Members of the Public:**

Alistair Dewar  
Stuart Haynes

**Guests:**

Claire Heeks	FPCR
Keith Nye	FPCR
Stephanie Crewe	LUC

**3. Apologies for absence**

- 3.1 Apologies were received from the following Members and officers:  
Cllr Mark Winnington, Staffordshire County Council  
Patrick Jervis, South Staffordshire Borough Council  
Dick Turton, Ramblers, Walsall Group  
Doug Stanley, Forestry England  
Gary Kelsey, Forestry England  
Nick Carter, Historic England  
Shaun Denny, Cemex
- 3.2 SH asked if the meeting can be recorded. It was advised that the constitution of the Joint Committee does not currently allow meetings to be recorded.

**4. Financial report**

- 4.1 The meeting received a report from the Treasurer to the Joint Committee.
- 4.2 Final revenue outturn 2019/20. The AONB was underspent by approximately £7k. Defra was returned £4.5k and approximately £2.3k underspend was transferred into the AONB Reserve. The closing reserve balance is circa £55k and has reduced significantly in 2019/20 as a result of the completion of additional works totalling circa £97k for the distribution and allocation of retained prior year underspends.
- The Sustainable Development Fund incurred spend of £19k and is outlined in Appendix 2 to the report.
- [Footnote: It was noted that whilst spend for the year was shown to be £183k, it was actually a lot higher and closer to £280k as it included £97k additional works funded from reserve]
- 4.3 Revenue budget 2020/21. Total funding for 2020/21 is approximately £192k. This represents a slight increase on 2019/20 due to Defra's contribution increasing by £2k. The extra £2k has been moved into AONB projects along with a proportion of the budget (£10k) previously allocated to the Sustainable Development Fund.
- 4.4 GH congratulated the team on spending the underspend.
- 4.5 SH asked where the Defra money has been spent i.e. the £97k. AH referred to the opening balance and closing balance in Appendix 5. The spend is also summarised in the Annual Review.
- 4.6 **Resolved:**

**(a) That the Committee approved the Financial outturn 2019/20**

**(b) That the Committee notes progress on the current net revenue spend for 2020/21.**

## **5. AONB Guides**

- 5.1 The meeting received a report of the AONB Landscape Planning Officer on a range of planning guides and initiatives which have the aim of ensuring that the natural beauty of the AONB is protected and enhanced.

### **AONB Design Guide**

- 5.2 The meeting received a presentation by Claire Heeks of FPCR (slides attached) which led to the following discussion.
- 5.3 FB felt it was an excellent guide.
- 5.4 MS acknowledged it was a really good piece of work. He would like to incorporate more nature and biodiversity into the document, taking the opportunity to raise these issues in people's minds as part of design. JB did incorporate some of MS's comments and expressed she was sorry if he felt it didn't go far enough.
- 5.5 Answering questions from Members about dissemination of the Guide(s), JB explained both the Design Guide and the Views and Setting Guide will be available on the AONB website and will be sent out to Local Planning Authorities. Opportunities to provide virtual / on-line training for Local Authority planning officers and Councillors are being explored. The guides could also be sent out to consultant planners/architects – focussing on the larger local practices that regularly submit applications in and around the AONB.
- 5.6 FB – Design should include design features in terms of climate change, water capture, solar panels. It is such an important document that it should be incorporated into local plans, and the AONB would welcome adoption by local authorities as an SPD. More discussions should be had with the Planning Authorities on the status of the document. JB reported there had been a lot of discussion on the status of the documents during workshops and consultation with partners. By using the Guide planning authorities would be fulfilling their duty to have regard to the AONB under the CROW Act (2000). JB will be using the guides and referring planning case officers to the Guides in her planning consultation responses. The Guide provides robust baseline evidence and good, sound advice, and is easy to use. Discussions are to be held with individual authorities on how best to utilise it.
- 5.7 LB thought it was an excellent document and felt it was necessary to share it with as many as possible, flagging up in particular the local housing authority. A training session could be offered at South Staffs. LB offered to help enable that. FB highlighted that AONBs don't have statutory powers, but we should seek to influence and engage, to ensure the use of the guides is maximised.
- 5.8 HMc felt it was an excellent piece of work and planning officers were involved in its development. Natural England will also be using it in their planning responses. The Officer Working Group will take forward an action with planning authorities and developers to get best use from the Guide. FB requested that the guide is taken forward with planning authorities and developers. IM -AONB to provide plan to achieve this.
- 5.9 FPCR were thanked for the presentation and for all their hard work.

### **Views and Setting Guide**

- 5.10 The meeting received a presentation by Stephanie Crew from LUC (slides attached) which led to the following discussion.
- 5.11 JB thanked SC for the presentation and added for clarity that the Viewpoint Specific Guidance is given for representative viewpoints. This is not intended to replace site and development specific landscape and visual impact appraisal.
- 5.12 SC confirmed that the 20 views are representative views. The locations provide a representation of typical views, spread out geographically around the AONB. JB added that the number of views was in part limited by budget constraints.
- 5.13 HMc felt it was an excellent document, and considers the setting, an often-forgotten element. The document gives step-by-step guide so developers can think about the impact on views within the AONB.
- 5.14 FB asked about dissemination – JB confirmed it will be disseminated as for the Design Guide, once it is endorsed by the Joint Committee, and will be used by the AONB in planning responses and to draw attention to the issues of views and settings to local planning authorities.
- 5.15 LUC was thanked for the presentation and for all their hard work.

#### **Car park improvements - Key Landscape Principles**

- 5.16 JB explained that this document has been prepared to provide design advice for landowners on any potential changes in car parking in the AONB being considered as a result of the SAC Partnership DIP Car Park Strategy, and in response to conversations with Chris Walsh (SAC Partnership) about potential landscape implications of car park works. It sets out design considerations and detailed key principles to minimise visual impact, protect and enhance biodiversity and protect heritage features. The major landowners have been consulted including local planning authorities who manage sites in the AONB. The version available with Committee papers is a draft and will be updated to embed the photographs of good practice within the text. If endorsed by the Joint Committee it will be available on the AONB website and sent to landowners who manage car parks to provide design pointers when considering car park improvements in the AONB.
- 5.17 FB asked if planning consent is needed. JB explained that this would depend on the proposal and the document advises landowners to seek the advice of the planning authority. FB recommended that we alert landowners to the document.
- 5.18 SH introduced himself and explained about the Save Cannock Chase group. The group objects to pay parking and restrictions to free access across the Chase. 80% of the group's members oppose SAC plans. JB reiterated the only aspect the AONB is dealing with is design. The questions raised are for the SAC partnership. SH asked for clarification on the current position of the implementation plans? He raised a broader question for the AONB. The DIP has been approved by all stakeholders. Where we are with that? FB responded we are not answering SAC questions. IM reported that both implementation plans have been approved and published on LA websites. GW identified LAs are obliged to protect the SAC and have produced mitigation plans. The DIPs are a method of managing car parks, with options to rationalise some, expand others. LAs have to be mindful of their legal responsibilities to the SAC. The plans present principles, and at this stage are not dealing with details. The details are not

known at this stage, and there will be future opportunities for further consultation and engagement.

- 5.19 RB raised that car park charges is an issue with WMBG and other stakeholders. Car park closures deter special interest groups. Having said that the design of car parks is an excellent document.
- 5.20 SH asked when is the next public consultation on the SAC Partnership's car parking proposals? FB said it is not a matter for this Committee. GW advised that precise dates can't be given at this stage. SH explained his biggest fear is that this will go forward without any input from residents.

#### **Dark skies**

- 5.21 JB reported that the AONB is hoping to collaborate with CPRE Staffordshire to raise awareness of dark skies and lighting in the AONB. CPRE have an established 'Star Count' citizen science project where members of the public are invited to go out on clear night in February and count the number of stars they can see in a particular constellation. We are looking to develop this at a local level around the AONB to raise awareness of the dark skies in the AONB and issues around light spillage and light pollution.
- 5.22 There would also be the opportunity to develop lighting guidance, with the help of specialists.

5.23 **Resolved:**

**(a) That the Committee endorses the AONB Design Guide and Views and Setting Guide**

**(b) That the Committee endorses the AONB Car Park Improvements – Key Landscape Principles**

**(c) That the Committee notes the progress to develop a Dark skies Project with CPRE Staffordshire**

#### **6. AONB Annual Review 2019-20**

- 6.1 Members received the report of AONB Development Officer presenting the AONB Annual Review 2019/20.
- 6.2 This is the first annual review that has been produced for 4 years. The AONB team has delivered a wide range of works. Some projects have carried over in 2020-21 but were started in the previous financial year so it is felt it is important to record them. The report sets out finances at the end and shows that we have spent almost all of budget and the underspend. SH's attention was drawn to page 12 which shows how the AONB underspend was utilised. During 2019/20 Defra were holding monthly monitoring meetings with the AONB. They are delighted with our performance and monitoring requirements will now revert back to the normal requirements.

6.3 **Resolved:**

**That the Committee approves the Annual Review for publication and dissemination**

#### **7. Impacts of COVID-19 on Cannock Chase and AONB delivery**

- 7.1 Members received a report of the AONB Development Officer setting out the impacts of the pandemic on Cannock Chase and AONB delivery.
- 7.2 All AONB staff have been working remotely since 3<sup>rd</sup> week of March. We have been able to hold virtual meetings, so our work has not been as affected as it could have been without this facility. The impacts of COVID-19 on AONB activities have been assessed using a traffic light system. Members are referred to the Report for high risk activities that have had to be cancelled. We have delayed the invitation for applications for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). RH has been working to refine the SDF documents. We are still hopeful we will attract funding this year.
- 7.3 Some other projects have taken longer to conclude due to partner or consultancy staff being furloughed. Compared to other AONBs, however, we have been relatively little effected. RB reported the West Midlands Bird Club is still working on long-eared owl survey.
- 7.4 Landowners have reported unprecedented numbers of visitors since lockdown restrictions have been eased. Unintended consequences of this have been large social gatherings, 2 major fires, and a range of anti-social behaviours. The local response to the pandemic was to close visitor centres during the lockdown; they are now re-opening them in line with govt guidance. We want to encourage responsible behaviour. All AONBs have been experiencing unprecedented numbers and antisocial behaviour.
- 7.5 We can anticipate higher than average number of visitors with all the associated problems and pressures this is causing to landowners and local communities. It is suggested that this requires a collective response and the AONB is offering to convene a meeting with major landowners in order to discuss what the issues are and best way to have a co-ordinated response.
- 7.6 The suggestion for a landowner meeting was supported.
- 7.7 MS proposed that the conversation between landowners should extend beyond COVID-19 to look at broader AONB-wide issues like nature recovery, visitor management and climate change, and include the SAC partnership.
- 7.8 GH supports a meeting with landowners. Recognised it is important that landowners join up. She highlighted the danger from plastic and broken bottles.
- 7.9 RB was grateful to IM directing him to Police for reporting incidents on the Chase. Whilst doing Nightjar work, he has noticed vehicles speeding across the Chase. The Police have been responsive, and recognises they are under huge pressure on the Chase. Whilst out on the Chase he has been concerned about numbers of vehicles and speeding, not just in association with Covid-19.
- 7.10 SH asked if the public could attend the proposed meeting? IM confirmed that the meeting was for the landowners and emergency services to discuss their response.
- 7.11 **Resolved:**

**That the committee supports the AONB Unit's offer to bring together the major landowners, authorities, emergency services and SAC Partnership in order to discuss the impacts of unprecedented visitor numbers on Cannock Chase and how to respond.**



## **8. Communications Strategy and Place Brand**

- 8.1 Members received a report of the AONB Development Officer which set out progress on a communications strategy for the AONB and the development of a place brand for Cannock Chase.

### **Communications Strategy**

- 8.2 Members were reminded of the presentation they received in December last year from SCC Communications team on the review of AONB internal and external communications. This highlighted shortcomings internally with the Partnership and with external stakeholders in our communications approach. A draft communication strategy has now been produced, incorporating the views of partners including the 6-visitor centre group, and Visitor Management Task & Finish Group.

### **Place Brand**

- 8.3 The need for a Place Brand for Cannock Chase was one of the key recommendations of the Communications Review. Place brand consultants FDA Design were appointed utilising part of last year's budget underspend. 6 initial concept designs were circulated for comments, from which 3 were shortlisted. Further work was completed, and from this the 'Walker' image was the clear favourite from those engaged and consulted. With Committee endorsement, this concept design will be taken forward as the umbrella place brand for Cannock Chase.
- 8.4 Outputs will include brand guidelines and a sense of place toolkit for businesses to embed the place brand into their products and services ... So far, feedback has been positive. The priority now is to work with individual partners to see how this umbrella brand will work with and sit alongside their existing brands.
- 8.5 **Resolved:**
- (a) That Committee notes progress on the development of a Communications Strategy**
- (b) That Committee endorses the 'Walker' concept design for a place brand for Cannock Chase.**

## **9. Planning update**

- 9.1 The meeting received a report of the AONB Landscape Planning Officer on development management and planning policy since the last meeting, as well as progress with HS2.

### **Development management and planning policy**

- 9.2 There has been a reduction in the number of planning applications since COVID-19. A brief summary of comments made on applications is included in the accompanying papers. Any queries on specific applications please get in touch with JB.
- 9.3 FB asked if Planning Authorities have taken account of AONB comments on planning consultation responses? JB reported that several consultations have been for amendments to applications where the AONB had objected and the proposals had been amended in response, indicating that notice is being taken. FB and LB requested a report to the next Committee meeting on this issue.

## **High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2a**

- 9.4 The Trent Sow Parklands HS2 Group now has a webpage hosted on the AONB website where the Design Principles document prepared for HS2 can be downloaded. Sam Caraway (Trent Sow HS2 Group's Project Manager) has been furloughed but is likely to be returning to work in August. Initial discussions with the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the proposed programme of Environmental Enhancements for the area were positive. However; NLHF have indicated that because of Covid 19, all funds have been diverted to their emergency fund and new applications for funding are not be proceeding for the time being.

### **9.5 Resolved:**

**(a) That Committee note progress made on planning matters since the last meeting.**

**(b) That Committee notes the update on HS2 Phase 2a**

## **10. AONB Annual Conference 2020**

- 10.1 Members received a report of the AONB Development Officer on proposals for running this year's AONB annual conference.
- 10.2 A face to face conference cannot be held this year due to Covid-19. There are three options, postpone a face to face conference until spring (although there is no guarantee restrictions would have been eased to allow this); hold the event in October as a virtual meeting; or cancel it altogether.
- 10.3 It was suggested to members that a virtual meeting this Autumn is the best way forward for keeping partners and stakeholders involved. Money allocated in budget for the conference (for venue hire and refreshments) can be used to engage IT support to hold a series of short webinars over several days.
- 10.4 GH supports virtual conference over 2-3 days. LB agreed. LB raised that we could ask a local MP to be principal speaker.
- 10.5 Committee was asked for feedback on possible future themes. The selection of a theme was delegated to officers.
- 10.6 **Resolved:**

**(a) That Committee holds the Annual conference 2020 virtually.**

**(b) That Committee delegates the choice of conference theme to officers.**

## **11. Any other business**

- 11.1 FB suggested we hold a tour of the Chase for new Council members. GH queried how can we do it at the moment with the current restrictions on the pandemic. We may have to restrict to 6 people at the moment which would make it difficult due to Government guidelines. IM to arrange and send out invitation to gather interest.
- 11.2 SH expressed his disappointment that the AONB was not aware of percentage of opposition to the car parking plans on Cannock Chase.

## **12. Date and time of next meeting**

- 12.1 IM to send round suggestion for next meeting in December.

ENDS

## Item 4 AONB Projects - updates

**Item for:** Information

**Author:** Richard Harris, AONB Land Management Officer

**Financial implications:** Current projects are funded through the 2020-21 AONB budget.

**Recommendations:** The Committee notes progress made on these projects and is invited to make any comments

## Background

1. The combined efforts of the AONB Unit, our partners, community groups and volunteers are delivering a range of projects supporting the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty of Cannock Chase.
2. This report updates members on some of our current and proposed initiatives. Information is provided in summary form, but more information is available from the AONB Land Management Officer.

## State of bats on Cannock Chase AONB and surrounds

3. Bats make an important contribution to the UK's biodiversity and all species are legally protected. Our knowledge and understanding of bats on and around Cannock Chase AONB is incomplete. A desktop study has, therefore, been commissioned involving searching, collating, mapping and analysing existing bat records. The findings will inform future conservation work for this species group, including the need for targeted field surveys as well as landscape improvements.

Contract awarded to Penny Anderson Associates Ltd. (£4950). 1800 records collated.  
Completion date: 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

## An invertebrate species audit for Cannock Chase AONB

4. Invertebrates make an important contribution to the UK's biodiversity but there is growing evidence of significant declines. Cannock Chase AONB is home to a number of invertebrates of conservation concern and local biodiversity interest, although information is dispersed, and records are thought to be incomplete or absent from significant parts of the protected area. This project aims to improve our understanding of invertebrates and invertebrate groups across the AONB through a desk study involving searching, collating, mapping and analysing existing invertebrate records. The findings will inform future conservation work on priority invertebrate species and species groups, including field surveys and habitat improvement measures.

Contract awarded to Buglife (£3893). Completion date: 31 March 2021

### Native crayfish survey, safeguard & Ark site habitat improvements

5. The White-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* is protected, along with its habitats under both UK and European legislation. It is listed as endangered on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species. Cannock Chase is nationally important for the species.

6. In 2019 the AONB commissioned surveys and habitat management to benefit the White-clawed crayfish and to control the invasive non-native Signal crayfish populations.
7. On the back of these surveys, we are working with partners and landowners to deliver recommended conservation improvements on the Chase. In 2020, for example, Staffordshire County Council translocated 200 White-clawed crayfish from the Birches Valley area to bolster an existing colony in the north west of the AONB, further surveys are being undertaken by partners as well as measures to control Signal crayfish.

Continue to work with partners and landowners to deliver recommended conservation improvements for crayfish. Potential project for further conservation improvements as part of AONB species recovery programme in 2021/22

### **Nightjars**

8. Cannock Chase holds nationally important populations of European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, which is listed on Annex I of the EC Birds Directive. There is much interest in the population status of Nightjar on Cannock Chase because of its historical association with the area, as well as decline of the species nationally. In 2019 the AONB Partnership supported the West Midlands Ringing Group to review how the population is faring and to identify potential factors impacting on breeding success so that appropriate conservation management could be implemented. In spite of Covid, a second year's survey has taken place during 2020. Interim results are already being used to safeguard nest sites when delivering broader habitat management obligations (invertebrate scrapes) by Staffordshire County Council on Cannock Chase Country Park - a good example of partnership working.

Continue to work with partners and landowners to deliver recommended conservation improvements arising from past surveys for nightjar. Potential project for inclusion in AONB Species Recovery Programme in 2021/22

### **Long-eared owls**

9. The Long-eared Owl is one of five owl species native to the UK and is classed as a Rare Breeding Bird. Cannock Chase AONB is regarded as a highly important area for the species because of its suitable woodland habitat and conditions, but little is known about the density or breeding population present. This project is a pilot study by the West Midland Bird Club (WMBC) funded through the AONB's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF). It is an innovative project using programmable audio recording devices to establish the presence, potential breeding population and density of long-eared owls on the Cannock Chase AONB. It is intended WMBC will follow this up with a full survey in 2021.

Grant award £465.00. Total Project cost £1,555.00. Completion date: 31 March 2021

### **Local Wildlife Sites**

10. Cannock Chase AONB includes 33 Local Wildlife Sites containing a wide range of habitats and wildlife. In 2019-20 Staffordshire Wildlife Trust was commissioned to assess their condition and recommend any management requirements. 19 sites out of the 33 were

surveyed and assessed against local wildlife site selection criteria to establish whether they justified retaining their status.

11. 12 sites have retained their Local Wildlife Site designation. One site is degraded, and the decision was taken to de-schedule the site. Another was subdivided into three individual sites, one of which was downgraded, one de-scheduled and the remaining part of the original site could not be surveyed due to access restrictions. 14 sites were not surveyed in 2019 for reasons including landowner access not being provided or missing the appropriate early season survey window due to the late project start.
12. 5 woodland sites that could not be visited in the early survey season are due to be surveyed in spring 2021. Once completed, we will have a better picture of the state of Local Wildlife Sites in the AONB. The findings will also be used to inform landowners and land managers on land management for biodiversity. They will also be used by Local Authorities to report to central government the proportion of Local Sites where positive conservation management is being achieved in their areas.

Proposal to extend contract to enable SWT to carry out remaining surveys of woodland sites in spring 21/22 (estimate £4,000).

### **Midlands Heathland Heartland**

13. The Midlands Heathland Heartland (MHH) is a strategic programme led by Natural England in the West Midlands that aims to enhance, create and connect heathland, woodland and associated habitats to build resilient landscapes between Cannock Chase and Sutton Park. It comprises 5 delivery projects, including two that are located within Cannock Chase: Project 1: Cannock Chase Wood Pasturescape; and Project 2: Public Forest Estate Land Exchange.
14. Project 1 Cannock Chase Wood Pasturescape aims to conserve and connect remnant wood pasture habitats around Brocton Coppice. Project 2 Public Forest Estate Land Exchange focuses on the potential to return 645 hectares of coniferous plantation to heath in exchange for an equivalent area of land elsewhere for productive forestry.
15. In 2020 as part of its commitment to the MHH programme the AONB Partnership evaluated the feasibility of a proposed land exchange on the public forest estate. This concluded that the exchange of land to facilitate the return of 645 hectares of the public forest estate to heath in exchange of an equivalent area of land for productive forestry elsewhere is, in theory, feasible, but relies on several factors. These include land availability, funding, public buy-in, overcoming appropriate permissions. Total project costs would be IRO £21.7 million.

Discussions will continue with Forestry England and partners to realise this opportunity.

### **Geological assessment**

16. Cannock Chase includes five Local Geological Sites (LGS) (previously known as Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites). LGS are identified as being of

importance at a county level as having geological and geomorphological features of substantive value. They are assessed against agreed selection criteria: value for educational purposes; value for professional or amateur Geologists; historical value; and aesthetic value of the landscape. The conservation condition of the five sites has not been assessed for several years. It is proposed, therefore, to carry out a re-assessment of their condition, to assess whether or not they meet the criteria for designation and identify any management requirements.

Contract to be awarded to Keele University (£375). Completion date: 31st March 2021

### **Heritage conservation, access and interpretation strategy**

17. Cannock Chase has a rich historic and cultural environment which includes archaeological remains, historic buildings and landscape features. Heritage consultants, Fearn Heritage, have been engaged to develop a strategy for the conservation, access and interpretation of this resource. The strategy takes forward previous work to inform our understanding of human activity across the Chase (Chase Through Time, 2016-18), and a 2020 assessment of the significance, vulnerabilities of heritage assets and their suitability for visitor access and interpretation. The strategy will develop and present: (1) capital works to physically enhance and maintain features of importance in need of conservation and enhancement; (2) improved physical and virtual access to better understand the heritage assets and facilitate the interpretation of heritage features, and; (3) interpretation to enhance the visitor experience and strengthen the relationship between the Chase and those who live on and around it. Stakeholder workshops will take place during January to feed in the thoughts and ideas of local partners. The implementation of the Strategy will be taken forward through the new AONB Business Plan 2021-23. Progress will be reported to the Joint Committee at its March 2021 meeting.

Contract awarded to Fearn Heritage and Archaeology (£8,975). Completion date: 31st March 2021.

### **Art in the Landscape**

18. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are cultural landscapes that are the product of people and place. The arts are a mechanism to explore a place through music, painting, poetry and dance and open up our experience and understanding of landscape. Following a successful bid to Arts Council England, supplemented with additional funding from individual AONBs, the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) has prepared a National Arts Strategy which it adopted at its AGM on 19th November 2020. A national training programme is being delivered to provide AONB staff with the know-how and skills to develop and explore working with the arts sector.

The Strategy and a proposed local response in Cannock Chase AONB will be reported to the Joint Committee at its March 2021 meeting.

### **Brindley Heath interpretation**

19. A collaborative project between the AONB Team, SAC Partnership, Staffordshire County Council is underway to improve the interpretation provision on Brindley Heath.
20. The Brindley Heath Village Legacy Group has captured the life of the former hospital and small mining community from archival research and the memories of the remaining villagers. The story will be brought to life through on-site interpretation and refreshing an existing leaflet. The materials will also explain the value of the Heath for nature and convey key messages about where to go and how to look after the Chase. The design of the interpretation materials will utilise the new Cannock Chase brand, helping to create a new sense of identity and purpose.

Total project cost £6,000. (SAC Partnership contribution £3,000).

### **Recommendations**

21. The Committee notes progress made and is invited to make any comments.

## **Item 5** **AONB Business Plan 2021-23** **Key Item**

**Item for:** Decision

**Author:** Ian Marshall, AONB Development Officer

**Financial implications:** A proposed budget for the next two years is presented based on a standstill position of Defra funding, until we have further information of any future grant settlement

**Recommendations:** That members approve the proposed draft business plan, with any amendments agreed at the meeting

### **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 five year period to deliver it.
2. Our Business Plan gives details of how the AONB Partnership itself, notably through its dedicated staff team, operates to deliver its contract with Defra and the commitments in our Management Plan. We are coming to the end of our first Business Plan for the period 2019-21, and in April will start another for 2021-23.

### **Objectives**

3. Our new Business Plan takes a realistic approach to utilising the challenges and opportunities ahead and working collaboratively to continue to deliver our statutory purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Cannock Chase.
4. The priorities have been determined through a combination of:
  - The progress we have made over the past two years to deliver commitments in our Management Plan, and what remains to be done
  - The input of partners through the AONB Task and Finish Groups and Officer Working Group
  - The dynamic operating context
  - The collective national aspirations for designated landscapes

### **Scope of activities**

5. An extensive range of actions is set out around our five themes - Landscape Character and Planning, Wildlife and Nature, Historic Environment, Experience and Enjoyment, Communities and Business. Comprehensive measures are also included to ensure effective Governance and Communication, embedding the actions arising from our AONB Communications Strategy and Cannock Chase place brand.

### **Delivery and funding**

6. The AONB Partnership will continue to conserve and enhance Cannock Chase through targeted deployment of financial and staff resources and building on the strong links with local people and groups.



7. An assumption has been made that AONB funding levels comprising 75% from Defra and 25% from constituent local authorities will continue at current levels, with small allowances for inflationary increases.
8. Many of the actions identified in the work programme can be delivered within the existing budget and resources of the AONB. Some, however, will require additional funding to proceed, and these are annexed in the Business Plan. The AONB single pot may be allocated for any matched funding contribution for funding bids, or additionally drawn from the AONB reserve. This will become clear as the development work proceeds and proposals will be brought to the Joint Committee for approval at the appropriate time. Projects are therefore indicative at this stage.

### **Recommendation**

9. That members approve the proposed draft business plan, with any amendments agreed at the meeting



# **Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

## **Business Plan 2021 - 2023**

**DRAFT V6. 17 November 2020**

cannockchase@staffordshire.gov.uk

[www.cannock-chase.co.uk](http://www.cannock-chase.co.uk)

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## 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 single statutory purpose of the AONB designation is **to conserve and enhance natural beauty**. National guidance has clarified that *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 it. The Management Plan provides a framework for everyone operating in the AONB and includes actions that many organisations may be involved in delivering.
- 1.4 This business plan sets out how the AONB Partnership itself, notably through its dedicated staff team, will operate to deliver its commitments in the AONB Management Plan over the two year period 2021 – 2023.

## 2. Who we are and what we do

### Governance of the AONB

- 2.1 The Cannock Chase AONB Partnership has the following governance structure:

AONB Joint Committee	Decision-making body for the Partnership including voting members from the five local authorities (elected members at Cabinet level) and advisory members from statutory agencies, landowning bodies, voluntary and community organisations.
AONB Officers Working Group	Steers and supports the AONB team and task groups to help implement the Joint Committee's decisions and supports implementation of the AONB management plan; may make decisions under delegation from the Joint Committee.
Task and Finish Groups	Bring together relevant partners to work with the AONB team to implement the management plan. Advisory and delivery-focused, report to the Joint Committee.
AONB Team	Delivery-focused team working to the Joint Committee supported by the OWG; works with the task and finish groups to deliver, monitor and review the management plan by coordinating activity with partners, leading project development and delivery as appropriate.

## The AONB Team

- 2.2 The AONB Team currently has 3 posts, one of which is part-time, making a total Full Time Equivalent of 2.6 FTE. The current staffing is:
- AONB Development Officer Ian Marshall, full time
  - AONB Land Management Officer Richard Harris, full-time
  - AONB Landscape Planning Officer Julia Banbury, 0.6 FTE
- 2.3 The team is hosted by Staffordshire County Council and based at their main office at Staffordshire Place in Stafford. Line management support is through the County Council's Rural County team; however, the team is accountable to the AONB Joint Committee and all work programmes and priorities are agreed through the Officers Working Group based on the business plan approved by the Joint Committee.

## National accountability

- 2.4 Core funding for AONBs is provided by Defra for the delivery of 'core functions' (Annex 1). The Defra grant 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, and the locally determined priorities for the AONB as described in the AONB Management Plan, supporting documents and as determined by the Joint Committee. The Defra funding contribution is claimed annually on provision of a work programme and progress report.
- 2.5 The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) is the umbrella organisation providing a voice for the 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The charity in its position of oversight, provides strategic leadership, encourages collaboration, shares learning, and supports a progressive approach to delivery such that the natural beauty of AONBs is better valued and more secure at the UK level. It does this by supporting and developing a network of ambitious AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards and acting as a collaborative voice for the AONB Family. Cannock Chase AONB is a member of the NAAONB. The NAAONB collates a set of performance indicators for all AONBs that it reports annually to Defra.

## 3. Where we are trying to get to

### Our vision

- 3.1 The Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019 – 2023 sets out a vision for the AONB in 20 years' time for everyone to work towards:
- '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’.*

### Our themes and priority objectives

3.2 To deliver our vision we have five themes and ten priority objectives:

Landscape Character and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain quality and distinctiveness</li><li>• Enhance the landscape setting</li></ul>
Wildlife and Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve conditions for nature</li><li>• Enlarge and connect habitats</li></ul>
Historic Environment and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conserve the Chase's historic environment</li><li>• Connect communities with the Chase's history and culture</li></ul>
Experience and Enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Treading lightly in the Chase</li><li>• A greener experience</li></ul>
Communities and Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Natural benefits for the Community</li><li>• Supporting the Special Qualities</li></ul>

3.3 To enable us to implement our vision and objectives also requires effective governance and communication:

Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having the systems and processes in place to ensure we are operating effectively</li><li>• Raising resources - ensuring we can do what we want to do</li></ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raising profile - telling others what we do and why we do it</li><li>• Inspiring people to look after Cannock Chase through greater awareness and understanding</li></ul>

## Delivery

- 3.4 The delivery of our strategic objectives is set out in an indicative work programme agreed by the AONB Joint Committee (Annex 2).
- 3.5 The programme includes a number of major AONB Projects which will require external funding contributions to proceed (Annex 3). These are listed together with an indication of their costs.

## 4. How we will get there

### The operating context

- 4.1 The AONB Management Plan 2019 – 2024 anticipated a number of challenges for Cannock Chase AONB over the five years of its life:
  - Climate change – improving the resilience of habitats and species to cope with climate projections
  - Housing development – ensuring that new development within and close to the AONB is sensitive to and enhances landscape character, as well as putting in place measures to mitigate the anticipated increase in recreational demand
  - High Speed 2 – mitigating the impacts of the proposed route on the setting of the AONB, views, landscape character and habitat connectivity
  - Commonwealth Games 2022 – leaving a lasting positive legacy on the AONB and its special qualities
  - Brexit and new arrangements for environmental support – preparing for the switch of agricultural support to payment for public goods by the end of the plan period.
- 4.2 We will continue to concentrate our attention to these challenges. There are a number of other areas to which we also need to respond and devote our energies:
  - the perilous state of UK nature, the need for nature recovery, and the response of the AONB family through the Colchester Declaration
  - managing the increased demand for access to the outdoors and nature (as witnessed by the unprecedented number of visitors to Cannock Chase during the COVID pandemic)
  - using the arts to engage people with landscape and nature, and transposing the NAAONB Art in the Landscape national strategy into local action on Cannock Chase
  - protecting and celebrating the Chase's rich cultural and historic environment
  - implementing the recommendations of the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes, and the Government's response.

We will be flexible in our approach to meet all of these and other challenges.

### Corporate risk

- 4.3 The AONB prepares a risk register which is reviewed periodically (Annex 4). This allows us to monitor and respond to potential risks in our day-to-day activities and project work.

### Monitoring and review

- 4.4 Individual actions contained within the work programme will be brought before the Joint Committee for information or decision as and when appropriate. Progress on the delivery of the overall business plan will be reported to the Joint Committee annually allowing the Committee to assess the efficacy of actions taken and to review the work programme in the light of changing circumstances. Papers and minutes of all Joint Committee meetings will be freely available on the Cannock Chase AONB website. Our main achievements will be reported in the Cannock Chase Annual Review.

## 5. How we will resource it

- 5.1 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.

### Core funding

- 5.2 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 core costs and lower contributions towards other costs. The remaining 25% of the core costs is provided by the local authorities based on a formula which takes into account the proportion of the AONB within their administrative areas.
- 5.3 The grant is currently allocated on an annual basis, pending the announcement of the Government's response to the Glover Review of designated landscapes. The predicted allocation of funding over the next two financial years is set out in Annex 5, and assumes the continuation of the current level of funding with small allowances for inflationary increases. The level of grant support is yet to be confirmed by Defra.

### Sustainable Development Fund

- 5.4 The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) is a sum of money within the Defra single pot that the Partnership can allocate as grants to third parties to support projects that contribute to AONB purposes, with match funds either as financial or in-kind contributions. The fund is widely promoted and applications for funding are considered by a grants panel which includes a voting member of the Joint Committee and representatives from the business, community and recreation sectors. The AONB team draws 10% from the fund to cover the costs of administration.



- 5.5 The SDF has typically been held at around £20,000. In recent years it has been difficult to find sufficient projects that meet the criteria to fund. In 2020/21, therefore, the Fund was reduced to £13,069, and the remainder reallocated as pump-priming money for AONB project development. The SDF would then be targeted at local community projects, with more strategic projects being funded via the single pot. The uptake of the SDF will continue to be monitored.

#### **Project development**

- 5.6 Many of the actions identified in the work programme can be delivered within the existing budget and resources of the AONB. Some, however, will require additional funding to proceed. The single pot may be allocated for any matched funding contribution for funding bids, or additionally drawn from the AONB reserve. This will become clear as the development work proceeds and proposals will be brought to the Joint Committee for approval at the appropriate time. Projects are therefore indicative at this stage.

## Annex 1. 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
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

## Annex 2. Work programme

\*\*is used to indicate those actions with budgetary implications\*\*, and highlighted in Annex 3.

Actions are referenced against AONB Management Plan policy and action numbers.

Actions led by the AONB Unit and/or Task and Finish Group leads are identified (HE – Historic Environment, LM – Land Management and Biodiversity, LP – Landscape and Planning, VM – Visitor Management).

Lead AONB Officers are identified for each action (DO – Development Officer, LMO – Land Management Officer, LPO – Landscape Planning Officer).

<b>Landscape Character and Planning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain quality and distinctiveness</li> <li>• Enhance the landscape setting</li> </ul>						
Priorities	Action	Key milestones	AONB policy / action Nos.	T&F Group Lead	AONB Team Lead	By when
Encourage landscape-led development	Monitor the effectiveness of our planning protocol with local planning authorities	Report to Joint Committee	LCP1	LP	LPO	Annually
	Input landscape advice to planning policy and development management	Responses to consultations	LCP1	LP	LPO	As required
	Promote and disseminate AONB Design and Views and Setting guidance amongst elected members, officers and developers	Training events held	LCP1, A1, A15	LP	LPO	Annually
	Represent the AONB in discussions around the Commonwealth Games to ensure that impacts are minimised, and the legacy is maximised	Engagement in meetings. Response to consultations	LCP1	LP	LPO	As required
	Provide landscape design input to HS2 enabling works	Responses to consultations	LCP1	LP	LPO	As required
Reduce traffic and highways impacts	Work with SCC Highways to update the AONB Highways Design Guide 2005	Refreshed Design Guide published and distributed	LCP2, B1	LP	LPO	2021-22, Q2

		to relevant partners and contractors				
Improve the quality and experience of the night skies	**Work with CPRE Staffordshire and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to develop a Dark Skies Project**	Project approved  Light pollution assessment undertaken  Good lighting guide produced  Star count undertaken by volunteers	LCP1, LCP9, A1	LP	LPO	2021-22, Q1
Protect and enhance views within the AONB	Work with statutory undertakers to explore opportunities for undergrounding powerlines in the AONB	Removal of a kilometre of overhead lines at Shugborough Estate to restore the historic character of this iconic Grade I listed park  Further opportunities identified	LCP8	LP	LPO	Ongoing
Encourage and support agricultural land management that contributes to the special qualities of the AONB	Continue to foster links with the farmer network following the conclusion of the Environmental Land Management Scheme National Landscapes advocacy project (2020-21), and encourage uptake of Countryside Stewardship	Network meetings  Countryside Stewardship applications submitted	LCP4, LCP5, A12	LP LM	LPO, LMO	Ongoing
Monitor the condition of the landscape	Support Fixed Point Photography volunteers to monitor 56 key views twice a year, and upload the results onto the AONB website	Photos taken and uploaded	LCP1-10	LP	LPO	Biannually
	Hold an interim review with volunteers	Review meeting held	LCP1-10	LP	LPO	Annually

	**Work with partners to prepare landscape visualisations of options for future landscape change**	Visualisations prepared.	LCP1-10	LP, LM, HE, VM	LPO, DO, LMO	2021-22, Q2
<b>Wildlife and Nature</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve conditions for nature</li> <li>• Enlarge and connect habitats</li> </ul>						
<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Key milestones</b>	<b>AONB policy / action Nos.</b>	<b>T&amp;F Group Lead</b>	<b>AONB Team Lead</b>	<b>By when</b>
Priority habitat recovery (woodland)	Work with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and landowners to deliver recommended conservation measures arising from assessment of woodland County Wildlife Sites carried out in 2020-21	All landowners advised, and conservation measures implemented	WN2, A2	LM	LMO	2021-22, Q3
Priority habitat recovery (wood pasture)	**Work with Natural England, partners and landowners to deliver Midlands Heathland Heartland Initiative (Project 1 Wood pasturescape)**	Delivery programmes underway	WN8, WN9, B7, A13	LM	LMO, LPO, DO	Ongoing
Priority habitat recovery (heathland)	**Work with Natural England, partners and landowners to deliver Midlands Heathland Heartland Initiative (including project 2 Public Forest Estate Land Exchange)**	Delivery programmes underway	WN8, WN9, B7, A13	LM	LMO, LPO, DO	Ongoing
	Monitor delivery of habitat and access improvements on Gentleshaw Common SSSI through the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative	Receipt of monitoring reports	WN3, A2	LM	LMO	Ongoing
	Work with landowners and Natural England to reintroduce livestock grazing to key sites, promoting the reasons and benefits to local communities	Grazing reintroduced at key sites, including Connecting Cannock Chase corridors	WN3, B4	LM	DO, LMO, LPO	Ongoing

Priority habitat recovery (wetlands)	**Develop and implement wetland restoration programme including Cannock Chase springs audit, peatland inventory, Sher Brook restoration programme, Sher Brook hydrological monitoring**	Programme developed and funded.	WN2, WN4, A2	LM	LMO	2022-23, Q4
Priority habitat recovery (grasslands)	**Develop and implement grassland inventory**	Preparation of inventory identifying all remaining unimproved grasslands	WN2, A2	LM	LMO	2022-23, Q4
Priority species recovery	**Support the West Midland Bird Club to carry out the 2022 Cannock Chase Bird Survey**	Publication of quinquennial bird survey	WN2, A2	LM	LMO	2021-22, Q4
	**Work with partners and landowners to deliver recommended conservation improvements arising from past surveys and audits for:	All landowners advised, and conservation measures implemented	WN2, A2	LM	LMO	2021-22, Q4
	Crayfish Bats Invertebrate groups Nightjars Long-eared owls					
	**Develop and implement Adder survey**	Publication of survey findings	WN2, A2	LM	LMO	2021-22, Q4
	**Develop and implement key invertebrate surveys**	Publication of survey findings	WN2, A2	LM	LMO	2022-23, Q4
	**Development and implement early successional species survey**	Publication of survey findings	WN2, A2	LM	LMO	2022-23, Q4
	Survey remaining woodland County Wildlife Sites not surveyed in 2019-20	Sites surveyed	WN2, A2	LM	LMO	2021-22, Q1
Balance the needs of a healthy deer population, with	Work with Woodland Trust and volunteers to improve our knowledge and understanding of veteran trees	Veteran tree records	WN2, A2	LM, LP, HE	LMO, LPO	From 2021-22
	Work with landowners to prepare a deer management strategy and action plan	Publication of deer management strategy and action plan	WN6, B5	LM	LMO	2021-22, Q2

habitats, property owners and the public						
Control invasive species	Prepare an audit of invasive weeds, pests and diseases	Audit completed	WN5, B6	LM	LMO	2021-22, Q3
	Share information with landowners to inform land management decisions and support development of collaborative approaches	Information shared	WN5, B6	LM	LMO	2021-22, Q4
Raise awareness and appreciation of Local Geological Sites	Work with partners and landowners to deliver recommended conservation measures arising from assessment of Local Geological sites carried out in 2020-21	All landowners advised, and conservation measures implemented	WN7, B19	LM	LMO	2021-22, Q2
<b>Historic Environment and Culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve the Chase's historic environment</li> <li>• Connect communities with the Chase's history and culture</li> </ul>						
<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Key milestones</b>	<b>AONB policy / action Nos.</b>	<b>T&amp;F Group Lead</b>	<b>AONB Team Lead</b>	<b>By when</b>
Improve the condition of heritage assets	**Work with landowners and Historic England to develop and implement conservation and enhancement measures arising from the Chase Through Time strategy (2020)**	All landowners advised, and conservation measures implemented	HC2, B17	HE	LMO	From 2021-22
	**Work with landowners to consolidate surviving OS trig points**	Trig points consolidated	HC2, B17	HE	LMO	2021-22, Q4
Raise awareness and understanding of the Chase's history and culture	**Work with landowners, Historic England and visitor centres/hubs/attractions to celebrate the AONB's cultural heritage through improved access and interpretation measures arising from the Chase Through Time strategy (2020)**	Funding secured and measures implemented	HC3, B9	HE	LMO	From 2021-22
Monitor the condition of the historic environment	Work with Historic England to support, co-ordinate volunteer activity to locate and assess the	Number of monuments assessed	HC1, B16	HE	LMO	Ongoing

	condition of the 7 Scheduled Monuments in the AONB	Recommended management actions communicated to landowners				
	Work with the National Trust to support, co-ordinate volunteer activity to locate and assess the condition of priority non-designated heritage assets in the AONB	Number of heritage assets assessed  Recommended management actions communicated to landowners	HC1, A14	HE	LMO	Ongoing
<b>Experience and enjoyment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treading lightly in the Chase</li> <li>• A greener experience</li> </ul>						
Priorities	Action	Key milestones	AONB policy / action Nos.	T&F Group Lead	AONB Team Lead	By when
Connect people with the landscape, heritage and wildlife of Cannock Chase	**Organise and run an annual Cannock Chase Walk and Ride Festival**	Festival held	EE3, EE5	VM	DO	Annually
	**Work with the Ramblers and SAC Partnership to review and refresh AONB promoted walking routes (X9)**	Leaflets re-published	EE4, EE5	VM	DO	2021-22, Q4
	**Work with the British Horse Society to review and refresh AONB promoted horse riding routes (X2)**	Leaflets re-published	EE4, EE5	VM	DO	2021-22, Q4
	Prepare and publish with partners Explore Cannock Chase leaflet	Leaflet published	EE4, EE5	VM	DO	2021-22, Q2
	**Work with SCC and SAC Partnership to refresh RAF Hednesford Interpretation panels, leaflet and digital information**	Panels and leaflets refreshed and installed	EE4, EE5	VM	DO	2021-22, Q4



	**Develop and distribute audio-visual presentation**	Presentation produced and used in key locations	EE4, EE5	VM	DO	2021-22, Q4
	**Develop and distribute through retail an AONB souvenir guidebook**	Guidebook published and for sale in retail outlets	EE4, EE5	VM	DO	2021-22, Q4
Encourage visitors to Cannock Chase to travel more sustainably	**Utilising the Cannock Chase place brand design work with train operators, local councils and SAC Partnership to 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)**	Totems installed	EE6, B12	VM	DO	Ongoing
Improve the visitor experience of Cannock Chase	Support the SAC Partnership to implement car park and site user implementation plans including improvements to car parks, interpretation provision, highways infrastructure such as welcome and gateway signage, reducing sign-clutter, and improvements to the roadside environment	Improvements implemented	EE1, EE4, A10	VM	DO, LPO	As required
	**Review the draft AONB Interpretation Strategy (draft 2016-2021), and finalise**	Strategy reviewed and published	EE4, A8	VM		2021-22, Q2
Connect people to nature and landscape through the arts	**Adopt the National AONB Arts strategy and develop a local action plan in partnership with local art groups and artists**	Strategy adopted. Local Action Plan adopted	EE5	VM	DO	2021-22
	Prepare and publish an anthology of poetry inspired by Cannock Chase	Anthology published	EE5	VM	DO	2021-22
	Organise poetry walks and workshops with Staffordshire Poet Laureate	Walks and workshops held	EE5	VM	DO	Annually

## Communities and Business

- Natural benefits for the community
- Supporting the special qualities

Priorities	Action	Key milestones	AONB policy / action Nos.	T&F Group Lead	AONB Team Lead	By when
Strengthen our volunteer base	Draft a volunteer policy, ensuring that we are compliant with all appropriate H&S, and equality and diversity legislation	Policy published	CB3, A6	AONB Unit	LMO	2021-22, Q1
	Provide ongoing support to volunteers engaged with Great War Hut, Fixed Point Photography, and Historic Environment surveys	Training and social sessions.	CB3, A6	AONB Unit	LMO	Ongoing
	Identify additional volunteer roles and recruit	Roles identified and volunteers recruited	CB3, A6	AONB Unit	LMO, DO, LPO	As required
Promote volunteering opportunities across the Chase	Support and engage with Cannock Chase Council Chase Up! Green Volunteer Network	Volunteers signposted to Chase Up!	CB3, A6	AONB Unit	LMO, DO, LPO	Ongoing
Inspire young people to appreciate and look after Cannock Chase	**Develop a resources pack to be used in schools and libraries, based on the Cannock Chase Code**	Resources pack published	CB1, B20	AONB Unit	DO	2022-23
	**Explore with outdoor education providers the scope for providing every child in Staffordshire to experience a 'night under the stars'**	Outdoor education providers contacted	CB1, B20	AONB Unit	DO	2022-23
	Improve links with Duke of Edinburgh, Scouts and Guides, and outdoor activity and education providers, and develop informatives about the value of the AONB	Informatives produced	CB1, B20	AONB Unit	DO	2021-22, Q4
Raise awareness and understanding of Cannock Chase and the AONB	Publicise Cannock Chase e-learning training courses with key audiences (volunteers, public bodies and businesses), and seek use as part of staff induction	Number of participants completing the course	CB1, CB2, B11	VM	DO	Ongoing
Build more sustainable and empowering relationships with local	Invite all known businesses on and in close proximity to Cannock Chase to register to use the sense of place toolkit	Businesses registered	CB4	AONB Unit	DO	2021-22, Q1

businesses by improving their awareness of Cannock Chase and embedding the AONB in their products, services and ethos.	Support registered businesses	Businesses supported	CB4	AONB Unit	DO	Ongoing
	Encourage businesses to apply for the Staffordshire Environmental Quality Mark award	Businesses signposted to SEQM	CB4, B14	AONB Unit	DO	Ongoing
We will reach out and connect to all parts of society, especially those who currently fail to benefit from Cannock Chase.	**Prepare a targeted plan to spread our key messages to 'missing audiences'**	Study commissioned	CB2	AONB Unit	DO	April 2022
	Promote the AONB Sustainable Development Fund, support applications where required and coordinate funding panel; management of claims etc.	Applications supported, and grant fully committed	CB2	AONB Unit	LMO	Call for EOI biannual

## Governance

- Having the systems and processes in place to ensure we are operating effectively
- Raising resources – ensuring we can do what we want to do

Priorities	Action	Key milestones	AONB policy / action Nos.	T&F Group Lead	AONB Team Lead	By when
Support effective governance and management of the AONB Partnership	Organise and support meetings of the Joint Committee	Minimum of 3 meetings each year (March, July (AGM) and December)	All	AONB Unit	DO	March, July, Dec
	Organise and support meetings of the Officers Working Group	Minimum of 3 meetings each year (March, July and December)	All	AONB Unit	DO	March, July, Dec
	Organise and support meetings of Task and Finish Groups, currently: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape &amp; Planning</li> <li>• Land Management</li> <li>• Historic Environment</li> <li>• Visitor Management</li> </ul>	Meetings held as and when required	All	AONB Unit	DO, LMO, LPO AONB Unit	As required

	Provide an annual report for the Joint Committee on progress of the Business Plan	Progress reported annually (Q4) against the Business Plan	All	AONB Unit	DO	Q4 annually
	Submit regular claims to Defra for core grant	Interim claim (75%) submitted September Final claim (25%) submitted March	All	AONB Unit	DO	Q2 and Q4 annually
	Maintain and update risk register	Register updated	All	AONB Unit	DO	Annually
Raise the profile of the AONB and articulate the value of what we do	Organise and run the Annual AONB Conference	Annual conference held	CB2, A7	AONB Unit	DO	As required
	Produce an annual report on AONB activity, showcasing the positive outcomes from AONB Partnership work	Annual report published	All	AONB Unit	DO	Q2 annually
	Report to the NAAONB performance statistics for Cannock Chase AONB against key metrics	Annual performance statistics returned by August each year	All	AONB Unit	DO	August annually
Play an active role in national AONB family activity	Contribute to the activities of the NAAONB including annual conference, AONB Chairmen's conference and AONB Lead Officer meetings as appropriate	Attendance at meetings	All	AONB Unit	DO, LMO, LPO	As required
Develop our relationship with regional protected landscapes	Attend meetings of the West Midlands Protected Landscapes Group	Attendance at meetings	All	AONB Unit	DO, LMO, LPO	As and when required
Raise resources	Establish the Cannock Chase Foundation (charitable incorporated organisation) to support AONB delivery	Agreed constitution.  Agreed MoU with AONB Partnership.  Establishment of CIO.	CB1, A4	AONB Unit	DO	Pending the Government's response to the review of Designated Landscapes

		Recruitment and appointment of Trustees				
Respond to the Government's recommendations of the Designated Landscape Review	**Adopt and implement recommendations from the Glover Review and encourage implementation of actions led by others**	Recommendations implemented	All	AONB Unit	DO	As required
Prepare for the update of the AONB Management Plan	Set out a timetable and resource provision for an updated State of the AONB report 2023 and updated AONB Management Plan 2024-2029	Timetable agreed.  Budgetary provision agreed	All	AONB Unit	DO	2022-23, Q4
<b>Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raising profile – telling others what we do and why we do it</li> <li>Inspiring people to look after Cannock Chase through greater awareness and understanding</li> </ul>						
<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Key milestones</b>	<b>AONB policy / action Nos.</b>	<b>T&amp;F Group Lead</b>	<b>AONB Team Lead</b>	<b>By when</b>
Implement the Cannock Chase place brand	**Apply the identity to websites, social media, posters and other publicity, signage and interpretation**	Place brand adopted	CB1, CB2	VM	DO	Ongoing
	Encourage visitor centres/hubs/attractions to use the Cannock Chase place brand and communicate consistent messaging about the special qualities of the nationally important landscape	Place brand promoted at all sites	CB1, CB2	VM	DO	Ongoing from 2021-22
	Provide targeted training for front of house staff at visitor centres/hubs	Training sessions held	CB1, CB2	VM	DO	2021-22, Q2
	Develop promotional merchandise to disseminate the place brand	Merchandise produced and sold in retail outlets	CB1, CB2	VM	DO	2021-22, Q4
Sustain regular communication	Keep partners and subscribers updated with news, events and activities through our newsletter	Minimum 4 newsletters published each year	CB2	AONB Unit	DO	Ongoing

channels to all partners within the AONB Partnership and with our key stakeholders	Review the effectiveness of our enewsletter and gauge how well our objectives have been understood	Survey undertaken	CB2	AONB Unit	DO	July 2021
Engage with the online community	Post on our social media channels at least once every two weeks	Minimum 2 posts each week	CB2	AONB Unit	DO, LPO, LMO	Ongoing
	Using our Cannock Chase network, we will encourage our partners to share our social media posts on their pages to increase its reach.	Social media posts shared	CB2	AONB Unit	DO, LPO, LMO	Ongoing
Raise awareness of Cannock Chase and the benefits it provides through co-ordinated public awareness campaigns across our partnership network	Work with our partners to deliver a calendar of awareness campaigns to share co-ordinated messages on our social media platforms, websites and other appropriate platforms, including Landscapes 4 Life week	Minimum 6 campaigns each year	CB2	VM	DO	Annually
	Support Forestry England and other landowners to promote the Ride with Respect campaign	Campaign launched	CB2	VM	DO	As required
Maintain the AONB website as the focus for information about the AONB and the work of the AONB Partnership	Keep the AONB website up to date, and aim to post news items at least once every two weeks	Minimum of one news item posted every two weeks	CB2	AONB Unit	DO, LPO, LMO	Ongoing
	Using our Cannock Chase network, we will encourage our partners to share news items on their websites to increase their reach	News items shared	CB2	VM	DO, LPO, LMO	Ongoing
Gain local press and media coverage to raise awareness of Cannock chase and the importance of protecting and conserving it	Work across the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership, SAC Partnership and Visitor Centres/hubs to find stories that we can develop into press and media releases on a bi-monthly basis.	Release 6 media stories annually	CB2	VM	DO, LPO, LMO	Ongoing
	Update these stories on our website and ask our partners to share the press release with their contacts in the media	Media releases shared	CB2	VM	DO, LPO, LMO	Ongoing

Raise Cannock Chase AONB's profile nationally, and work with the National Association for AONBs and AONB family to shape the national agenda and drive forward our collective ambition for designated landscapes	With the National Association for AONB's and the AONB family, we will contribute towards national press, research, papers and advocacy to promote Cannock Chase and help deliver the outcomes of the Glover Review.	Number of inputs	CB2	AONB Unit	DO, LPO, LMO	Ongoing
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### Annex 3. AONB projects

Project	Estimated cost
Dark Skies project (light pollution assessment and publication of good lighting guide)	£10,000
Landscape visualisations of options for future landscape change (6 visualisations)	£6,000
Heathland / forestry land exchange	c. £20 million
2022 Cannock Chase Bird Survey	Not yet known
Conservation improvements for key species:  Crayfish Bats Invertebrate groups Nightjars Long-eared owls Adders	Not yet known (pending audit /survey recommendations)
Woodland Local Wildlife Sites survey	£4,000
Wetland restoration programme including Cannock Chase springs audit, peatland inventory, Sher Brook restoration programme, Sher Brook hydrological monitoring	£30,000
Adder survey	£10,000
Key invertebrate surveys	£10,000
Early successional species survey	£5,000
Consolidation of surviving trig points	£2,500
Walk and Ride Festival	£5,000
Walk leaflets re-design and re-print X9	£5,000
Horse riding leaflets re-design and re-print X2	£1,000
RAF Hednesford Interpretation refresh (panels, leaflet and digital information)	£15,000
Audio-visual presentation	£8,000
AONB souvenir guidebook	£6,000
Sustainable travel welcome and interpretation totems and posters at train stations	£20,000
Review the draft AONB Interpretation Strategy (draft 2016-2021), and finalise	£10,000
Develop and implement a local arts action plan in partnership with local art groups and artists	Not yet known
Resources pack to be used in schools and libraries,	£5,000
Explore with outdoor education providers the scope for providing every child in Staffordshire to experience a 'night under the stars'	Not yet known
Study to understand engagement with under-represented groups	£5,000
Adopt and implement recommendations from the Glover Review	Not yet known



## Annex 4. Risk register

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>Defer volunteer activities</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; project management measures in place; 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 governance structure is supporting 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; staff work from home	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

## **Annex 5. Budget prediction for 2021-23**

To be inserted

<b>Local Members Interest</b>
N/A

## **Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee**

**11th December 2020**

### **Finance Update Revenue Budget 2020/21 and 2021/22**

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

#### **Recommendations**

1. a) **Revenue Budget Outturn 2020/21**

That progress on the current net revenue spend for 2020/21 is noted.

b) **Revenue Budget 2021/22**

The draft net revenue budget for 2021/22 is considered and agreed.

#### **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 2020/21 budget and its current, initial forecast outturn position.
  - The approval of 2021/22 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 2020/21

- 4.1 Since the update presented on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020 additional funding has been approved of £7,210 of which DEFRA are contributing £5,210 and The National Association of AONB £2,000 towards the Environmental Land Management Scheme. This increases the previously reported overall budget for 2020/21 from £192,510 to £199,720.
- 4.2 The forecast financial position for the Core and Action Projects Budget is set out in *Appendix 1* which shows a nominal net spend to date of £97,031 together with the outturn currently predicted for the year. The predicted outturn for the end of the financial year totals £189,786, compared to the approved net budget of £199,720, giving an anticipated overall underspend of £9,934 of which £8,485 relates to SDF. However, AONB officers are in the process of developing a number of new projects to ensure that this year's budget will breakeven. These include supporting a refresh of the TOC-H trail at Brindley Health in partnership with Staffordshire County Council and Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles, as well as a refresh of the interpretation provision of RAF Hednesford in collaboration with the SAC Partnership and Staffordshire County Council.
- 4.3 The latest position available for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for 2020/21 is set out in *Appendix 2* with projects approved to date currently amounting to £465 in total and further applications under consideration totalling a further £2,813. After the administration fee earned by the AONB Unit of £1,307 is deducted from the SDF Grant this leaves a balance of £8,485 currently unallocated, this is reflected in the overall underspend of £9,934 referred to above in paragraph 4.1. This is partly due to the impact of COVID with charity and community group staff and volunteers being on furlough, but also due to several of the expressions of interest we received not being directly relevant to our core purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty and, therefore ineligible for funding.

#### 5. Revenue Budget 2021/22

- 5.1 The draft net revenue budget for 2021/22 is set out in *Appendix 3* and reflects no annual inflationary uplift on salaries but does make provision for incremental growth within pay scales, 1% on pension fund contributions and 0% on all non-pay items.
- 5.2 The level of grant support from Defra for national landscapes for 2021/22 has yet to be announced. In the light of the tight spending context and until such time as the Government fully considers the recommendations of the Glover Review it is proposed, therefore, that the net revenue budget for the 2021/22 Core Programme Costs should remain at its existing 2020/21 funding level of £167,370. Local authority funding contributions are also unchanged.

- 5.3 Due to the continuing difficulties experienced in spending the full allocation of SDF funding, it is proposed to reallocate £3,070 of its 2020/21 funding level (reducing it to £10,000) to AONB projects (increasing the latter to £15,150). This will help deliver more of the wide range of actions set out in the proposed AONB Business Plan 2021-23.
- 5.4 This gives a total net revenue budget of £192,510 for 2021/22, of which expected funding contributions to be confirmed from DEFRA total £150,670.
- 5.5 The 2021/22 net revenue budget, subject to approval by the AONB Joint Committee at today's meeting, will form the basis of the annual grant submission to Defra in January 2021.

## **6. Reserve**

- 6.1 The balance on the Cannock Chase AONB Reserve currently stands at £56,126 for 2020/21. A summary of the Reserve is attached as *Appendix 4*.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 These priorities are reviewed annually in December of each year.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that the balance on this reserve at the end of 2020/21 will be £56,126.

## **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	Nikki Mihajlovic Finance Unit	01785 278829
	Sarah Bentley Rural County	01785 276047

### List of Background papers

None



## Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

### Cannock Chase AONB Core and Project Costs

#### Predicted Outturn for 2020/2021

December 2020	Budget *	Spent or Committed to Date	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
<b>Core Budget</b>				
Salaries	131,910	77,111	130,610	-1,300
Training Expenses	1,510	0	100	-1,410
Travel and Subsistence	2,200	133	266	-1,934
<b>Staff and Associated Costs</b>	<b>135,620</b>	<b>77,245</b>	<b>130,976</b>	<b>-4,644</b>
Office Equipment	2,600	949	2,600	-1
Annual Audit	400	-400	400	0
Volunteer Costs	500	0	500	0
National Liaison	3,000	3,156	3,156	156
Print & Publicity	5,000	600	5,000	0
Partnership Running Costs	9,000	9,000	9,000	0
<b>Core Budget subtotal</b>	<b>156,120</b>	<b>90,549</b>	<b>151,631</b>	<b>-4,489</b>
<b>Core Programmes</b>				
AONB Website	0	0	0	0
Annual Conference	2,000	0	2,000	0
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	9,240	0	9,518	278
<b>Core Programmes subtotal</b>	<b>11,240</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11,518</b>	<b>278</b>
<b>Sustainable Development Fund</b>	<b>13,070</b>	<b>1,307</b>	<b>4,585</b>	<b>-8,485</b>
<b>AONB Projects</b>	<b>12,080</b>	<b>5,175</b>	<b>14,850</b>	<b>2,770</b>
<b>Environmental Land Management Scheme</b>	<b>7,210</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,202</b>	<b>-8</b>
<b>Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn</b>	<b>199,720</b>	<b>97,031</b>	<b>189,786</b>	<b>-9,934</b>
<b>New Projects to be developed</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,934</b>	<b>9,934</b>
<b>Anticipated Forecast Outturn as at 31 March 2021</b>	<b>199,720</b>	<b>97,031</b>	<b>199,720</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Funded By:</b>				
<b>DEFRA Grant</b>				
Core	-125,520	0	-125,520	0
Sustainable Development Fund	-13,070	0	-13,070	0
AONB Projects	-12,080	0	-12,080	0
Environmental Land Management Scheme	-5,210	0	-5,210	0
<b>DEFRA Grant subtotal</b>	<b>-155,880</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-155,880</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Local Authority Contributions</b>				
Lichfield District Council	-2,090	0	-2,090	0
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,090	0	-2,090	0
Cannock Chase District Council	-8,370	-8,368	-8,370	0
Stafford Borough Council	-8,370	0	-8,370	0
Staffordshire County Council	-20,920	-20,920	-20,920	0
<b>Local Authority Contributions subtotal</b>	<b>-41,840</b>	<b>-29,288</b>	<b>-41,840</b>	<b>0</b>
Sales and Donations	0	0	0	0
National Association of AONB - Environmental Land Management Scheme.	-2,000	-2,000	-2,000	0
Membership Fee Income	0	0	0	0
<b>Funding from(+)/to reserve(-)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>-199,720</b>	<b>-31,288</b>	<b>-199,720</b>	<b>0</b>

\* Budget rounded to nearest £10

## Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

### Sustainable Development Fund

Budget Update for 2020/2021

December 2020	Budget	Spent or Committed to Date	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
<b>Approved Projects</b>				
West Midland Bird Club - long-eared owl monitoring	465	0	465	0
<b>Applications under consideration:</b>				
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust - wildlife garden	813	0	813	0
National Trust - orangery restoration	1,000	0	1,000	0
CTT volunteers - landscape change	1,000	0	1,000	0
<b>Approved Projects Total</b>	<b>3,278</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,278</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Admin Fees</b>	1,307	1,307	1,307	0
<b>Currently Unallocated</b>	8,485	0	0	-8,485
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,070</b>	<b>1,307</b>	<b>4,585</b>	<b>-8,485</b>

## December 2020 draft Cannock Chase AONB Budget 2021-22

	Total	Defra Grant
<b>AONB Core Budget</b>		
Staff Salaries and Associated costs	£139,440	£104,580
Office Equipment	£2,600	£1,950
Annual Audit	£400	£300
Volunteers	£500	£375
National Liaison	£3,160	£2,370
Print & Publicity	£5,000	£3,750
Partnership Running Costs	£9,000	£6,750
<b>Core Budget subtotal</b>	<b>£160,100</b>	<b>£120,075</b>
<b>Core Programmes</b>		
AONB Website	£0	£0
Annual Conference	£2,000	£1,500
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	£5,260	£3,945
<b>Core Programmes subtotal</b>	<b>£7,260</b>	<b>£5,445</b>
Sustainable Development Fund	£10,000	£10,000
AONB Projects	£15,150	£15,150
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£192,510</b>	<b>£150,670</b>

	Total	% of Expenditure
<b>Funded By:</b>		
<b>DEFRA Grant</b>		
Core	£125,520.00	75.00%
Sustainable Development Fund	£10,000.00	100.00%
AONB Projects	£15,150.00	100.00%
<b>DEFRA Grant subtotal</b>	<b>£150,670.00</b>	
<b>Local Authority Contributions</b>		
Cannock Chase Council	£8,370.00	5.00%
Stafford Borough Council	£8,370.00	5.00%
Lichfield District Council	£2,090.00	1.25%
South Staffordshire Council	£2,090.00	1.25%
Staffordshire County Council	£20,920.00	12.50%
<b>Local Authority Contributions subtotal</b>	<b>£41,840.00</b>	<b>25.00%</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£192,510.00</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

## 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				-92,485	577	54,819
2020/2021	54,819				1,307		56,126
		9,134	7,673	27,409	-913	2,610	56,126

<b>Item 7</b>	<b>Dark Skies Project Proposal</b>
<b>Item for:</b>	Decision
<b>Author:</b>	Julia Banbury, AONB Landscape Planning Officer
<b>Financial implications:</b>	Allocation of £11,850 from AONB core budget
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To support the development of a Dark Skies Project for Cannock Chase AONB in order to improve the quality of the dark skies of this nationally important landscape and to offer advice on reducing local light pollution.</li> <li>2. To allocate resources to enable delivery.</li> </ol>

### **Background**

1. Members will recall the verbal report of the Landscape Planning Officer at the Joint Committee Meeting in July 2020, on a potential Dark Skies project to be developed with the countryside charity CPRE. CPRE has promoted the importance of dark skies for nearly three decades. At regular intervals it has published maps of light pollution for the whole country, as well running an annual Star Count and campaigning on the need to take action locally.
2. Cannock Chase is the smallest inland AONB, sitting between Stafford 4 km to the northwest, Rugeley directly to the east and Cannock and Burntwood directly to the south. The surrounding conurbations have a significant effect upon tranquillity, spilling light into the darker skies of the AONB. Light spillage from outside the area creates a challenge to the AONB to deliver its core purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the protected area.

### **Project proposal**

3. The project aims to raise awareness and engage with the local community to:
  - better appreciate and enjoy the wonder of dark skies in Cannock Chase AONB
  - better understand the effects of light pollution on human well-being, wildlife and sustainability, and
  - foster a sense of responsibility towards protecting and enhancing dark skies and reducing light pollution in the area.
4. It will be progressed through 3 main elements:
  - Community Engagement / Citizen Science Cannock Chase AONB Star Count
  - Dark Skies Survey
  - AONB Good Lighting Guide

### **Resources**

5. The project can be co-funded from the Cannock Chase AONB budget and CPRE staff in-kind and volunteer contributions.

#### **Element 1. Community Engagement / Citizen Science Cannock Chase AONB Star Count**

This element can be progressed using existing CPRE staff and volunteers. In addition, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust would be able to promote the Star Count at their normal Half Term events at the Wolseley Centre at no additional cost. The Trust has also offered to include bespoke family activities (2No) and delivering a pilot Dark Skies school programme (resources plus 3No sessions) for £1,850.

#### **Element 2. Dark Skies Survey**

To commission a dark sky survey and technical report to record the condition of the AONB's skies, establish any potential for dark sky status and incorporate recommendations.

#### **Element 3. AONB Good Lighting Guide**

To jointly commission with CPRE a good lighting guide for the AONB.

6. Overall estimated costs and sources of funding:

	<b>Estimated costs</b>	<b>AONB funding</b>	<b>In-kind contribution</b>
Element 1	£ 2,850	£1,850 (SWT)	£ 1000 (CPRE staff and volunteers)
Elements 2 and 3	£10,370	£10,000 (consultant)	£370 (CPRE staff)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£13,220</b>	<b>£11,850</b>	<b>£1,370</b>

### **Outcomes**

7. It is anticipated that the project will deliver multiple outcomes including:
  - Raised awareness of the value of dark skies for human health, wildlife, peace and tranquillity, and protecting natural beauty in a National Landscape
  - Raised awareness that light pollution is an issue in our area
  - Reduction in light pollution generated
  - Development that includes less polluting, more efficient lighting
  - Improved use of efficient and effective lighting
  - Fewer negative economic, social and environmental impacts from light pollution.

### **Recommendations**

8. (1) To support the development of a Dark Skies Project for Cannock Chase AONB in order to improve the quality of the dark skies of this nationally important landscape and to offer advice on reducing local light pollution, and (2) to allocate resources to enable delivery.

# Cannock Chase AONB

## Dark Skies Project

### Proposal

The Cannock Chase AONB Partnership and CPRE Staffordshire, the countryside charity, are seeking to work together to improve the quality of the dark skies of this nationally important landscape and to offer advice about what we can all do to reduce local light pollution.

### 1. Introduction

Cannock Chase is a nationally and internationally important landscape. It was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1958 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The primary purpose of the designation, as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000, is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

Natural England's Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, identifies six contributing factors to natural beauty; landscape quality; scenic quality; relative wildness and tranquillity; natural heritage and cultural heritage. The [Management Plan 2019 -2024](#) sets out the AONB's special qualities in relation to each of these factors. In relation to Relative Wildness and Tranquillity it describes the AONB as:

*"A haven of tranquillity and wildness, compared to the busy towns and roads that surround it....,"*

Dark skies are one of a number of factors contributing to the area's sense of tranquillity and wildness. Light pollution has the potential to erode that tranquillity and sense of remoteness. It also has adverse impacts on our health and wellbeing, wildlife behaviour, and wastes resources.

CPRE, the countryside charity has promoted the importance of dark skies for nearly three decades<sup>1</sup>. At regular intervals it has published maps of light pollution for the whole country, as well running an annual Star Count and campaigning on the need to take action locally. CPRE uses the results of its annual Star Count to lobby the government and local authorities to tackle light pollution, and to highlight which 'dark sky' areas need to be protected and enhanced by strong policies. Their work has shown that Cannock Chase is the least dark of all 34 AONBs in England. However, the central core of the Chase is still a relative oasis of darkness for people to enjoy compared to the surrounding conurbations.

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<sup>1</sup> CPRE Dark Skies. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-care-about/nature-and-landscapes/dark-skies/>

## 2. Background

Cannock Chase is the smallest inland AONB, sitting between Stafford 4 km to the northwest, Rugeley directly to the east and Cannock and Burntwood directly to the south. The surrounding conurbations have a significant effect upon tranquillity, spilling light into the darker skies of the AONB. Light spillage from outside the area creates a challenge to the AONB to deliver its core purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the protected area. The change in % of the AONB recorded as ‘most tranquil’ is one of the monitoring indicators in the AONB’s Monitoring Framework<sup>2</sup>.

[CPRE's Night Blight: Mapping England's light pollution and dark skies \(2016\)](#) identifies the importance of National Parks and AONBs for dark skies, and whilst Cannock Chase AONB is noted as having brighter skies than other AONBs its importance as an oasis of darkness relative to the surroundings is noted.

*“There are 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England which protect 26% of our darkest skies. ....On average, Cannock Chase AONB is the brightest, although 47% falls in the third darkest category and there is no severe light pollution; the majority of the light spills out from the towns of Cannock, Rugeley and Stafford into the AONB. This shows that the AONB is an oasis of darkness for people to enjoy compared to the surrounding towns.”*

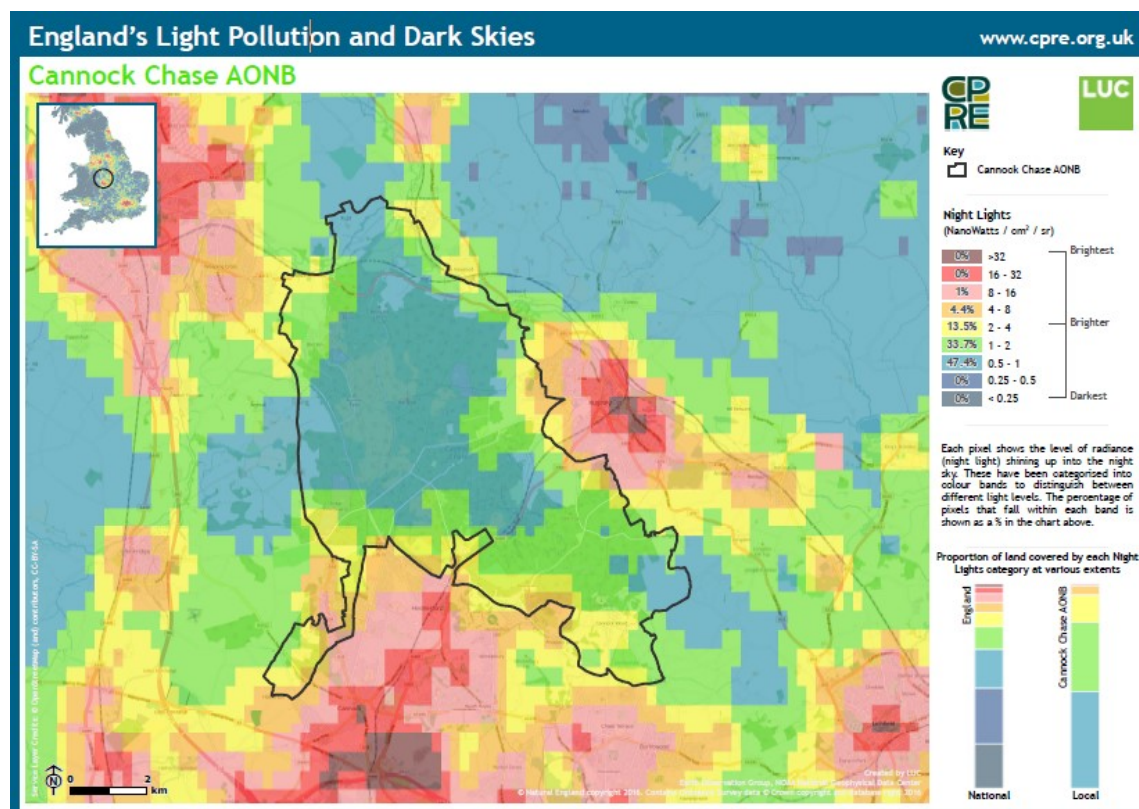


Figure 1. CPRE Map Night Blight for Cannock Chase AONB

<sup>2</sup> Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. Monitoring Framework



### **3. The Need for Dark Skies**

#### **(i) Human health**

The rhythms of the natural light-dark cycle of day and night are vital to good human health. Yet few people, especially those living in urban and peri-urban areas, experience truly dark nights in our modern, built-up world.

Increasingly, research suggests that artificial night light can increase risks for obesity, depression, sleep disorders, diabetes, and breast cancer amongst others. In particular, exposure to blue light at night is especially harmful, suppressing the secretion of the hormone melatonin which influences circadian rhythms or our daily body clocks. At the moment, this includes the light emitted from most outdoor lighting LEDs. The International Dark Sky Association <sup>3</sup> has detailed the threats associated with exposure to blue-rich white light sources. More recently, a 2016 report by the American Medical Association (AMA)<sup>4</sup> highlighted health concerns about the exposure to blue light from outdoor lighting.

#### **(ii) Adverse Impacts on Wildlife and Ecosystems**

Increasingly, scientific evidence is indicating the harmful effects that artificial light at night has on many creatures including amphibians, birds, mammals, insects and plants. The 2016 AMA report, referred to above, indicated that the detrimental effects of blue-rich LED lighting are not limited to humans, but also other species which suffer disruption of their circadian rhythms. New research in 2017 showed the impact LED lighting has on the behaviour of number of grassland species which has deleterious knock-on effects for food-webs.<sup>5</sup> The authors at the University of Exeter showed that it was possible to manage LED lighting to reduce its environmental impacts by, for example, changing their spectrum, and dimming them and switching them during the early hours.

#### **(iii) Energy Costs and Carbon Emissions**

Poorly-designed or misdirected light, which shines into the sky rather than onto the ground or the object intended to be illuminated, contributes to 'sky glow', the orange haze many of us now see rather than dark skies and the stars. Not only does this have light pollution impacts, affecting our ability to witness dark skies, but often wastes energy, raising costs unnecessarily and contributing to carbon emissions and global warming.

#### **(iv) Additional Benefits of Dark Skies**

Aside from mitigating the negative impacts of light pollution with the concomitant societal and environmental benefits, increasingly high-quality night skies have been viewed as boosting so-called astro-tourism, so providing an economic stimulus. Following the designation of the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park in 2013, the tourism authority in Northumberland reported many of the hotels in and close to it witnessed

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<sup>3</sup> 2010, May 4, International Dark-Sky Association. Visibility, Environmental, and Astronomical Issues associated with Blue-Rich white Outdoor Lighting.

<sup>4</sup> 2016. American Medical Association. Report of the Council on Science and Public Health. Human and Environmental Effects of Light Emitting Diode (LED) Community Lighting. CSAPH Report 2-A-16

<sup>5</sup> R Davies, T.W., Bennie, J., Cruse, D., Blumgart, D., Inger, R. & Gaston, K.J. (2017) Multiple night-time LED lighting strategies impact grassland invertebrate assemblages. *Global Change Biology*, DOI:10.1111/gcb.13615  
Dark Skies Study: Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB – BRO/DSW 2018 15

increases in business with visitors, especially those from urban areas, wishing to see and experience the wonders of the night sky. This has also been reported in other areas globally where there are high-quality dark skies and areas in Wales like the Brecon Beacons, Anglesey and Gwynedd have been devising ways of boosting business through astrotourism. In the Galloway Forest Park in Scotland, a Dark Sky Observatory hosts regular Night Sky experiences for members of the public.<sup>6</sup> Appendix 1 describes dark sky designations that would potentially be relevant to the AONB.

#### **4. Crime and Safety Considerations**

Reducing outdoor lighting is sometimes cited as being responsible for increased crime, anti-social behaviour, and reduced road safety. However, whilst outdoor lighting at night is often meant to enhance safety and security, its overuse and/or poor management can in fact have the opposite effect, impacting adversely upon visibility. Thus, glare from bright, unshielded lights reduces safety by constricting pupils, so impacting on the ability to see and making it more difficult to adjust to lowlight conditions. In addition, a 2015 study in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, looking at data for road traffic collisions and crime in 62 local authorities across England or Wales found little evidence of any harmful effects of switch-off, part-night lighting, dimming, or changes to white light/LEDs on road collisions or crime.

#### **5. Project Outline**

This project aims to raise awareness and engage with the local community to:

- better appreciate and enjoy the wonder of dark skies in Cannock Chase AONB,
- better understand the effects of light pollution on human well-being, wildlife and sustainability, and
- foster a sense of responsibility towards protecting and enhancing dark skies and reducing light pollution in the area.

The project will be progressed through the following three elements:

##### **1. Community Engagement / Citizen Science Cannock Chase AONB Star Count**

The aim would be to raise awareness and interest in dark skies and light pollution in the AONB through CPRE's Star Count. Star Count is CPRE's national citizen science project held in mid/late February, inviting participants to count and report how many stars they can see in the Orion constellation. The number of visible stars is an indicator of background light levels and light pollution. The results of the Star Count 2020 are available [here](https://forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/forest-parks/galloway-forest-park/dark-skies). Data would be collected and analysed at a local level within the AONB, with the aim being to collect data from a wide range of survey locations located throughout the residential areas in and adjacent to the AONB. Publicity is essential to maximise engagement and participation in the local Star Count, and CPRE will assist with this via their existing contacts with schools, local organisations and social media. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have offered to include Dark Skies in

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<sup>6</sup> <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/forest-parks/galloway-forest-park/dark-skies>

their themed February Half Term activities at the Wolseley Centre, and promote involvement in the local Star Count, at no cost to the project.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust could also deliver community / educational activities on Dark Skies on behalf of the AONB for a fee, comprising:

- bespoke family activities on an appropriate site either over half term week, or the weekend around the time of the project. These would be themed around Dark Skies, raise awareness of CPRE's Star Count and promote involvement in local data collection.
- write and deliver a Dark Skies school programme and help promote to SWT's established school contacts.

Events would be subject to government COVID 19 guidance. Under the lockdown only the school element could be delivered but all others may be feasible, dependant on local restrictions. Star Count is unaffected as it can be done at home by individuals or families.

## **2. Dark Skies Survey**

An assessment of the current quality of the dark skies in the AONB and the sources of light pollution is critical to providing the evidence base for community engagement, consideration of whether Dark Sky status is achievable<sup>7</sup> and the provision of advice and guidance and decisions on how measures should be targeted.

Online access to radiance and light pollution is available, that broadly helps identify sources of light pollution. However, these data sources provide an overview and the scale of data presentation brings inaccuracies when considering variations across our small AONB. A professional survey is recommended, to accurately record radiance and light pollution across the AONB. This would help identify: potential for dark sky status; preferred locations for promoting stargazing events; significant sources of light pollution and key types or locations of concern in the AONB; and help inform the good lighting guide

## **3. AONB Good Lighting Guide**

Building on the evidence gathered from the star count, desktop available data and professional survey, the AONB Partnership will develop a Good Lighting Guide with practical advice on the ways in which better illumination can reduce light pollution. This will be aimed at householders, businesses, public authorities, and community asset managers. The focus should be positive with messages of the steps that can be taken to reduce impacts, to make lighting dark sky friendly (right place, right level and on at the right time).

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1 for an explanation of the different categories of Dark Sky status.

## 6. Resources

The resource implications of developing the three elements of this project are as follows. The project can be co-funded from the Cannock Chase AONB budget and CPRE staff in-kind and volunteer contributions.

### **Element 1. Community Engagement / Citizen Science Cannock Chase AONB Star Count**

This element can be progressed using existing CPRE staff and volunteers. In addition, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust would be able to promote the Star Count at their normal Half Term events at the Wolseley Centre at no additional cost. The Trust has also offered to include bespoke family activities (2No) and delivering a pilot Dark Skies school programme (resources plus 3No sessions) for £1,850.

### **Element 2. Dark Skies Survey**

To commission a dark sky survey and technical report to record the condition of the AONBs skies, establish any potential for dark sky status and incorporate recommendations (an example methodology is included in Appendix 2)

### **Element 3. AONB Good Lighting Guide**

To commission a good lighting guide for the AONB, similar to the Blackdown Hills Good Lighting Guide, enhanced and tailored to Cannock Chase AONB. This would be produced jointly by the AONB and CPRE. Element 2 and 3 could be commissioned together, or it may be feasible for Element 3 to be produced in-house.

Overall estimated costs and sources of funding:

	<b>Estimated costs</b>	<b>AONB funding</b>	<b>In-kind contribution</b>
Element 1	£ 2,850	£1,850 (SWT)	£ 1000 (CPRE staff and volunteers)
Elements 2 and 3	£10,370	£10,000 (consultant)	£370 (CPRE staff)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£13,220</b>	<b>£11,850</b>	<b>£1,370</b>

## 7. Outcomes

It is anticipated that the project will deliver multiple outcomes including:

- Raised awareness of the value of dark skies for human health, wildlife, peace and tranquillity, and protecting natural beauty in a National Landscape
- Raised awareness that light pollution is an issue in our area
- Reduction in light pollution generated
- Development that includes less polluting, more efficient lighting
- Improved use of efficient and effective lighting
- Fewer negative economic, social and environmental impacts from light pollution.

## **8. Recommendation**

To support the development of a Dark Skies Project for Cannock Chase AONB in order to improve the quality of the dark skies of this nationally important landscape and to offer advice about what we can all do to reduce local light pollution.

To allocate resources to develop each of the elements outlined, including community engagement and educational elements delivered by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust on behalf of the AONB.

**November 2020**

## Appendix 1. Dark Sky designations

Currently, there are five International Dark-Sky Association designations: International Dark Sky Communities, International Dark Sky Parks, International Dark Sky Reserves, International Dark Sky Sanctuaries, Dark Sky Developments of Distinction. The following are those potentially relevant to the AONB, and indicate the main features of each of the designations according to the IDA (note the emphasis is largely on US definitions of areas and organisations)

**Parks:** Must be public or private land, accessible to the public in part or whole, that is legally protected for scientific, natural, educational, cultural, heritage and/or public enjoyment purposes. The core area must provide an exceptional dark sky resource, relative to the communities and cities that surround it, where the night sky brightness is routinely equal to or darker than 20 magnitudes per square arc second.

**Reserves:** Must be public or private land of at least 700 km<sup>2</sup>, accessible to the public in part or whole that is legally protected for scientific, natural, educational, cultural, heritage and/or public enjoyment purposes. The core area must provide an exceptional dark sky resource, relative to the communities and cities that surround it, where the night sky brightness is routinely equal to or darker than 20 magnitudes per square arc second.

**Sanctuaries:** Must be a public or a private land, accessible to the public in part or whole, that is legally protected for scientific, natural, educational, cultural, heritage and/or public enjoyment purposes. The site must provide an exceptional dark sky resource where the night sky brightness is routinely equal to or darker than 21.5 magnitudes per square arc second.

## Appendix 2 Survey Methodology

The International Dark Sky Association provides advice on the structure of a sky quality survey. The survey comprises three basic components:

**Quantitative measurements** using a light meter or similar device. The IDA recommend using a [Sky Quality Metre](#) with Lens (SQM-L). SQM measurements should be taken on 3 separate nights.

**Photographic all-sky images** to reveal sources of light pollution. This requires use of a full-frame digital SLR camera plus a 180 degree fisheye lens. (The IDA insist on photographic evidence as a requirement for application.)

**Qualitative assessment** of the night sky using the naked eye, in order to rate the sky using the Bortle Scale.

If a submission to the IDA was being considered for Dark Sky designation, this would require that the whole area is representatively analysed. For this using a grid system is suggested to provide a good representation of the area. However, locations need to be reasonably accessible by vehicle or accessible on foot close to roads. This is important first, to ensure safe access for the survey team, and second, since at least some locations would be accessed by local people and visitors to view the night skies.

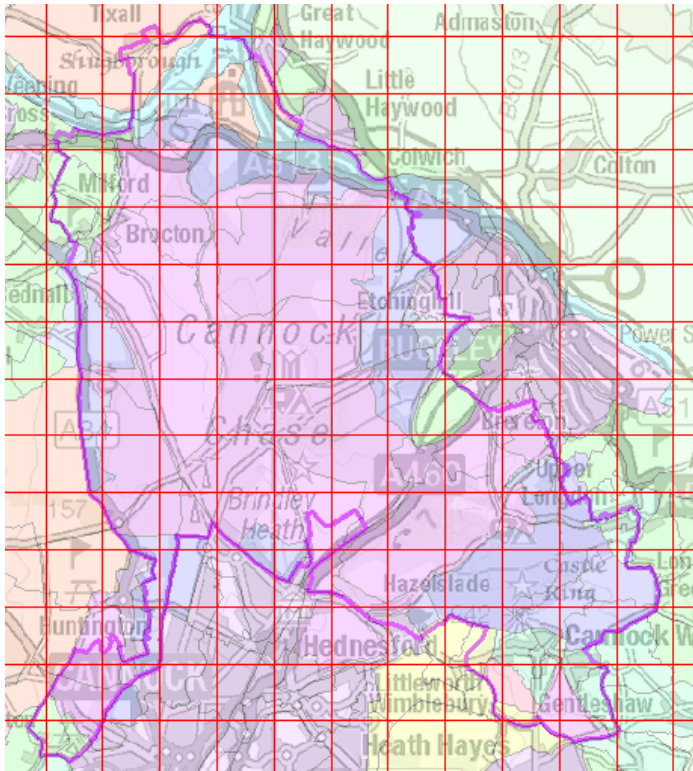


Fig 1 km grid superimposed on AONB

The grid would establish 75 locations in the AONB, the majority of which are within 1km of a road to a nearby path location. Locations on private land would not be accessible unless by road right of way. A few locations just outside the AONB (for example in Rugeley, Prospect Village, Pye Green) could be considered to compare light levels in nearby urban locations with those in the AONB.

Locations could perhaps be adjusted to include one or two AONB Fixed Point Photography points.

<b>Item 8</b>	<b>Environmental Land Management (ELM) Scheme advocacy project</b>
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Item for: Information

**Author:** Ian Marshall, AONB Development Officer

**Financial implications:** Grants totalling £7,200 have been received from Defra and the National Association for AONBs and will need to be spent by 31 March 2021

**Recommendations:** The Committee notes the report and is invited to make any comments

## Background

1. Cannock Chase AONB has received grants totalling £7,200 from Defra and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) to promote the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) Scheme with farmers and landowners in the designated area.
2. The funding is part of a national initiative across England's National Landscapes (AONBs and National Parks) to prepare farmers and landowners for the new ELM scheme which is going to be one of the options to replace current farming support arrangements from 2024.
3. The grants will be used to engage an agri-environmental consultant to work alongside AONB officers and establish and liaise with local farmer/landowner networks within Cannock Chase AONB. All monies will be spent by 31 March 2021.

## Environmental Land Management Scheme

4. The Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme is the cornerstone of the government's new agricultural policy. Founded on the principle of 'public money for public goods', ELM will provide a way of achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and commitment to net zero emissions by 2050, while supporting the rural economy.
5. The scheme means farmers and other land managers may be paid for delivering the following public goods: clean air; clean and plentiful water; thriving plants and wildlife; protection from environmental hazards; beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment, and; reduction of and adaptation to climate change.
6. Defra is currently running tests and trials to shape the ELM scheme, and a national pilot, before full roll-out in 2024.

## Environmental Land Management (ELM) Scheme advocacy project

7. The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) has secured Defra funding to raise awareness and understanding of the new



Environmental Land Management Scheme with farmers and landowners across all 44 of England's AONBs and National Parks.

8. Each AONB and National Park has, in turn, been allocated funding to engage farmers in their area, promote ELM (and Countryside Stewardship as a route to ELM) using a range of provided materials, and feed back the outcomes for reporting to Defra.
9. By providing information now, in the right format, the intended outcome will be increased understanding of ELM (and Countryside Stewardship) and improved engagement in the run up to rollout.
10. In the long-term, it is hoped that the farmer/landowner networks established in each National Landscape will continue, and that AONB Partnerships will be seen as a convener of ongoing support and advice.

#### **Cannock Chase farmer and landowner network**

11. Cannock Chase AONB is unusual in that 64% of its area (total area = 6865 ha) is owned by just 7 public bodies and charities. Whilst the AONB Partnership has good knowledge and working relationships with these public bodies and charities, it has had little engagement in recent years with the farmers, equine industry and private landowners who manage the remaining 36% of the designated landscape. This absence of engagement also extends to neighbouring farmers and landowners in the setting of the AONB. This project is, therefore, an opportunity to deliver commitments in the AONB Management Plan to improve our knowledge and understanding of farming and land management in and around the AONB, and to lay the foundations for building longer-term relationships with all public, private and charitable land owners and land managers.
12. Agri-environment consultants are, therefore, being engaged to work alongside AONB Officers to:
  - Provide insight about farming, farmers, landowners and agri-environment scheme uptake in and immediately around Cannock Chase AONB
  - Establish the foundations for a Cannock Chase AONB Farm Cluster Network(s) to work across the landscape to improve and enhance the environment of Cannock Chase
  - Raise the profile of Countryside Stewardship and the Environmental Land Management scheme with farmers and land managers in the AONB and its immediate environs, to aid their understanding of the schemes and facilitate increased uptake.
13. The project outputs will be assessed by a final evidence-based report delivered by the lead organisation (NAAONB). Cannock Chase AONB will be responsible for providing input to the final report on the outputs above.

#### **Recommendations**

14. The Committee notes the report and is invited to make any comments.

## Item 9 Mountain biking on Cannock Chase

Item for: Information

**Author:** Ian Marshall, AONB Development Officer

**Financial implications:** None

**Recommendations:** The Committee notes the report and is invited to comment on the issues raised and advise on any further measures required.

## Background

1. Mountain biking is a popular recreational activity on Cannock Chase. The plentiful bridleways and dedicated cycle trails offer opportunities for exercise and fresh air in a beautiful setting, and a range of technical challenges for people of different abilities. In addition to being a destination for local riders and families, the Chase has gained a national reputation as a go-to place for more expert mountain bikers. This interest will further increase after the Commonwealth Games in 2022 when Cannock Chase Forest hosts the mountain bike event and markets the site as a mountain biking destination.

### Impacts of mountain biking

2. The majority of cycling on Cannock Chase takes place responsibly and people derive physical and mental health benefits from the outdoor exercise. It is also estimated (Forestry England) that mountain biking brings up to £300,000 per annum into the local economy.
3. Some of the promoted cycling routes on Cannock Chase (eg the 'blue' Sherbrook Trail) coincide with the most ecologically sensitive habitats – the internationally important heathlands.
4. There is growing evidence about misuse by some cyclists, irresponsible behaviours, as well as pressure from the volume of biking activity in some localities. It is noted that whilst mountain biking issues have increased during the present COVID pandemic, this is an underlying, longer term challenge. Areas of concern include:
  - Congestion of cycling routes at busy times and potential conflicts with other users
  - Widening and erosion of bridleways and cycle trails due to heavy usage
  - Unauthorised riding on footpaths and creation of new routes across the wider Chase
  - Illegal trail building involving tree felling, ground excavations and re-profiling, as riders seek new challenges
  - Unauthorised organised cycling events
  - Night-time riding
  - Aggressive riding, particularly where riders perform against the clock
5. There are numerous consequences from these activities and behaviours:
  - Risks to public health and safety

- Risks to the AONB to the detriment of its natural beauty
- Sensitive wildlife is being disturbed
- Habitats and features of special conservation importance are being damaged and placed at risk, such as, the veteran trees at Brocton Coppice, and the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- The amenity of local residents is being compromised
- Conflicts between user groups are emerging (including an extreme case where a route was sabotaged), alongside a disparity in views over future management to balance recreational access with conservation needs
- The resources of public authorities and the emergency services are being stretched having to respond to incidents arising from these threats.

### **Local response**

6. During 2020 the AONB and SAC Partnerships have brought together the major landowners, authorities and emergency services to discuss co-ordinated approaches to tackling these issues. A range of measures is being considered and put in place:
  - Direct engagement – by going into schools, onsite workshops with users close to the key access points onto the Chase, involving local cycle groups
  - Online presence and social media (Forestry England has set up a Cannock Chase mountain bike group on Facebook to have a more direct dialogue with users and move them to ambassadors)
  - Onsite signage to positively inform riders where they can and cannot ride, the value of the Chase, and the impacts they can have
  - Business involvement and champions to promote responsible behaviour
  - Weaving initiatives into the work of existing partnerships and landowners
  - Removal of unauthorised trails and reinstatement of damaged ground
  - Zoning the Chase – to deter cycling from the most sensitive parts
  - Potential police investigation in some cases where damage to the site could be an offence
  - Being aware of the full range of tools that could be used, such as, Public Open Space Protection Orders and enforcement of byelaws if absolutely necessary

### **Commonwealth Games legacy**

7. As part of the legacy of hosting the mountain bike event for the Commonwealth Games 2022, the current 'blue' Sherbrook trail will be de-commissioned as a promoted cycling route. Forestry England will also lead the preparation of a responsible riding campaign. This will be launched by May 2021 and will aim to raise awareness, get rules into consciousness, and change behaviours. The campaign will advocate that it is not inherently wrong to cycle on Cannock Chase – it is all about riding in the correct places and riding responsibly.

### **Recommendations**

8. The Committee notes the report and is invited to comment on the issues raised and advise on any further responses required.

## **Item 10 Cannock Chase business engagement**

**Item for:** Information

**Author:** Ian Marshall, AONB Development Officer

**Financial implications:** Printing and distribution costs for business engagement will be paid from the AONB core budget

**Recommendation:** The Committee notes the report and is invited to comment

### **Background**

1. The AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 advocates improving links with local businesses to improve awareness and understanding of the AONB and how its special qualities can benefit their products and services.
2. The AONB Partnership is working to strengthen relationships with the business sector in a number of ways: through elearning courses that explain about the AONB, what makes it special and how it benefits society; the proposed establishment of a Cannock Chase Landscape Trust (CIC) as a mechanism for businesses, community groups and individuals to support the work of the Partnership and; the development of a brand vision for Cannock Chase.
3. This report describes progress achieved for the development of a place brand for Cannock Chase and the preparation of an accompanying Sense of Place Toolkit. Progress on other initiatives will be reported at future meetings.

### **Cannock Chase place brand**

4. Joint Committee has been previously informed about the development of an outward facing place brand for Cannock Chase - one of the key recommendations of the AONB Communications Review and an integral part of the AONB Communications Strategy. This new place brand will be at the heart of our future plans for the area, and something that people can relate to and which evokes emotion, generates a sense of pride, changes behaviours, and drives action.
5. In July the Committee endorsed a preferred concept design that had been developed in consultation with partners and stakeholders. 'The Walker' design concept:
  - Symbolises the experience of taking a walk on Cannock Chase, moving from a wooded landscape to the open heathland
  - Portrays an open landscape with the prospect of freedom, tranquillity and wildlife
  - Links with the positive message of encouraging healthy exercise.



6. Final place brand outputs are now being prepared and will comprise:
- A visual identity, key messages and brand narrative
  - Brand guidelines (the vision and essence of the brand - design styling, consisting of logo, supporting text, graphic and photographic imagery, typographic principles and colour palette)
  - A Sense of Place toolkit (to encourage businesses to engage with Cannock Chase and embrace the place in their products and services)
  - Brand implementation plan (ideas for building the brand in a gradual, organic way that allows people to 'discover for themselves')

### **Sense of Place toolkit**

7. The Sense of Place toolkit is targeted at the 5,000 or so businesses operating in and immediately around the AONB. It describes how 'sense of place' gives an area its identity and makes it different from elsewhere, and how it affects our attachment to a particular place. 'Sense of place' and 'place attachment' are fundamental to the protection and conservation of landscapes – the more that people develop an understanding of their area, the more they will appreciate its qualities, take pride in it, and want to look after it. The concepts are also directly relevant to businesses, as they influence the choices customers and clients make about where to live, work and spend their leisure time and money.
8. The toolkit is designed to help businesses appreciate the special qualities of Cannock Chase and focus on how they can use a sense of place to develop and promote their products and services. Through a combination of words and images it tells the story of the Chase and provides talking points around four key messages: 1. a national landscape, 2. wild and beautiful, 3. a landscape for everyone, 4 protect, respect, enjoy.
9. Once the toolkit is signed off, businesses will be contacted about the new place brand and invited to register on the AONB website to use the toolkit. Registration, and signing up to terms and conditions, will allow the business full access to the toolkit, and to download and use digital versions of the Cannock Chase logo, business locators, and a selection of professionally taken images. The introduction of a registration process is intended to identify those businesses who are genuinely interested and committed and want to work with us. There is no charge for using the toolkit and its products.
10. It is envisaged that the Sense of Place toolkit will primarily be available in digital format. However, it may be advantageous to print a small number of hard copies to give to key partners/businesses with whom we want a more personal approach.

### **Recommendations**

11. The Committee notes the report and is invited to comment.

**Item 11****Planning update**

- (a) Development management and planning policy**
- (b) Planning White Paper**
- (c) Birmingham Commonwealth Games Mountain Biking Event**
- (d) High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2a**

**Item for:** Part (a): Information  
Part (b): Information  
Part (c): Information  
Part (d): Information

**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, (Items a – c)
- 2. Members to note the update on High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2a

**Part (a) Development management and planning policy**

- 1. Since July 2020 the Landscape Planning Officer has reviewed 21 applications, of which 3 were for amended applications in response to previous objections. Seven applications did not need a full response as there were no concerns to raise. There has also been consultation on three pre-application discussions.
- 2. The table below indicates applications where an objection was made and the outcomes to date. Full responses are available from the AONB Landscape Planning Officer.

Category	Summary of response	Outcome/notes
<b>Planning Application</b>		
20/00456/VAR Land Off Sandy Lane Hatherton Variation of condition	Widening the access would result in urbanising effects, detrimental to the character of the AONB. bell mouth should be the minimum required to satisfy the highway authority on safety grounds.  Landscape conservation and enhancement recommended	Approved with conditions 22.09.20  Tree protection, Landscape scheme to protect AONB

20/32454/HOU: Evesham Old Coach Lane Brocton: Proposed extensions and garage	No concerns regarding house extensions but request mitigation for garage  Scheme later agreed	Approved 24.08.20
17/00195/COND Bednall Hill Farm Vicarage Lane Bednall Discharge of conditions	Objected to original application.  Advice on materials and strengthening vegetation on eastern boundary (facing AONB)	Approved 10.09.20 following amended plans
CH/19/173 Hill Farm, 84 Hayfield Hill, Cannock Wood Application to regularise use of site as Class B1(c) Light industrial, retention of Building D to house fork lift truck	Strong objection: would only be appropriate for approval to relate to the existing buildings, yard and access road; excluding the majority of the pasture field'	08.07.20 Approved with adjusted red line boundary removing field adjacent to Hayfield Hill from application, plus conditions
L.20/03/867 M Land South of the A513, Orgreave, Alrewas: Proposed sand and gravel extraction, and concrete plant to supply HS2	Request clarity on potential effects from the AONB. Northern parts of the site and concrete plant may be visible and a detracting element in the wider rural landscape. As proliferation of development would have potential to disrupt and detract from views from the AONB, request that the AONB is consulted as a matter of course on potential allocations in the area. Advance planting of woodland well ahead of allocation and/or development would have potential to reduce landscape and visual impacts.	Awaiting decision
CH.20/04/709 M Rugeley Quarry  Vary conditions to CH.00/0577 and S.400/18 re phasing	Proposed departure from approved restoration plan needs to be addressed to avoid potential long-term impact on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.  Seek commitment to phased restoration, including bringing forward some areas into restoration, in order to deliver early habitat establishment and reduce impacts on landscape and natural beauty.	Awaiting decision

20/00469/FUL Land adjacent 6 Malthouses, Malthouse Rd, Gentleshaw 3 bed detached dwelling	Objection. The openness of the Green Belt in and around the AONB is an important element of the landscape and scenic beauty of the designated area. Therefore, unless the local planning authority is fully convinced that the proposal is appropriate the AONB Joint Committee would support the continued application of Green Belt policies to the current application. There is also the potential for approval to create a precedent for infill in and in the setting of the AONB.	Refused 19.08.20
20/32438/COU Home Farm House, 114 Main Road, Milford: Retrospective change of use to from agricultural to workshop and parking of vehicles	Main Road Milford is a gateway route into the AONB therefore proposals should avoid visual detractors close to the road. Vehicle parking should therefore only be permitted away from the access onto Main Road closely associated with agricultural buildings.	Approved 02.10.20
<b>Pre- application discussion</b>		
Pre-ap REF04576  Land at Oakdene, Penkridge bank Rd  Residential development and access	Significant concerns and would object to an application.  Use of the paddock for residential purposes with the proposed use of an informal track through the adjacent SSSI would be detrimental to the character of the AONB in this area and increasing urbanising influences. Also be a risk of possible applications for permanent residence on the site. Potential redevelopment of the stables raises similar concerns.  Use of the track within the SSSI would be likely to require formalisation of the junction onto Penkridge Bank Road and possibly upgrading the track which, aside from potential effects on the SSSI, would increase urbanisation close to the core of the AONB.  Refer to Cannock Chase AONB Design Guide.	



## **Part (b) Planning White Paper**

3. A response was made to the national consultation on the Planning for the Future White Paper on behalf of the Joint Committee. The response highlighted issues that were relevant to the Partnerships objectives of conserving and enhancing the AONB. Key concerns raised related to:
- Proposal to time-limit preparation of local plans. Our response raised concerns that plan making needs to be based on robust evidence and with meaningful local consultation, which take time;
  - Proposal to streamline development management content of local plans and set general policy nationally. We responded that local policies are desirable for local circumstances such as to reflect the statutory purposes of designated landscapes;
  - Developing a zonal system for local plans with automatic permission for growth and renewal areas. Our response raised concerns that the proposed zones appear over simplistic and risk in-principle approval prior to assessment of environmental effects. If effects only become evident later there would be limited scope for avoidance or mitigation. Potential effects and erosion of the landscapes in the setting of Cannock Chase AONB is a concern;
  - Protected areas. We suggested more clarity is needed regarding development in protected areas.
  - Proposed standardised planning statement. We are concerned that this would be inadequate to assess impacts on heritage, biodiversity and landscape and may encourage a lack of consideration of individual site constraints and character leading to standardised design solutions. We also believe local development management has a key role in ensuring development is sustainable and sensitive to local character.
  - Lack of consideration of climate and biodiversity emergency. We believe the White Paper needs to align with environmental legislation as regards biodiversity net gain, nature recovery networks and local nature recovery strategies and HRA.
- The full response is available from the AONB Landscape Planning Officer.

## **Part (c) Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 – Mountain Biking Event**

4. AONB officers have been consulted on the Commonwealth Games proposals both informally and formally. AONB officers have emphasised that there needs to be greater recognition, awareness and understanding of Cannock Chase AONB; its sensitivities, and statutory obligations, as distinct from the sensitivities of the SAC. The project also needs to recognise that it will be adding to the large numbers of visitors that already come to Cannock Chase, and this creates pressures that are damaging the special qualities of Cannock Chase and threaten to undermine its international and national standing.
5. Cannock Chase District Council have agreed that implementation of the new Blue Trail on FE land may be constructed under Permitted Development Rights. Natural England and CCDC have accepted the evidence submitted on behalf of Forestry England that construction would not result in detrimental impacts on the SAC, and should benefit the SAC.

6. A planning application to Cannock Chase District Council is required for the temporary overlay associated with the event. As the proposal is temporary no landscape and visual impact assessment will be required by the council. The AONB has been consulted formally and informally on the proposals. The formal Pre-application response sought clarity on concerns raised by the AONB, including:
  - The need to avoid insensitive long-term hard surface treatments (eg, tarmacadam) to existing car park and access routes, (including along Stafford Brook Road / Kingsley Wood Road, which is only partly tarmacadam surfaced).
  - To avoid potential detrimental effects of visitors on the landscape, wildlife and habitats as a result of uncontrolled vehicular access and parking, and large numbers of spectators arriving to gather around the course, trampling vegetation etc. We requested clarity on traffic management for arrivals at the 'Venue' including any temporary car parks and drop off points, and any proposed surfacing improvements; and details of proposed traffic and visitor management for access to the proposed course beyond the 'Venue' across the wider AONB. Any environmental effects need to be identified and detrimental impacts minimised.
7. Aside from the planning application for the event, officers have requested detail of:
  - The full scope of all elements of the Commonwealth Games and its legacy (eg, enhanced red route, new blue trail, decommissioning the current blue trail, bike play trail, marketing campaign, responsible riding campaign, mountain bike adventure centre, sustainable travel plans, traffic management and spectator management plans for the GC event and any associated infrastructure development/improvements)
  - The long-term aspirations of Forestry England for mountain biking on Cannock Chase
  - And how both of the above will conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Cannock Chase AONB

#### **Part (c) High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2a**

8. Since the report to Joint Committee in July, the Trent Sow Parklands HS2 Group (the Group) has been working towards preparing the Environmental Enhancement Plan for delivering £1.5 million funding secured from HS2 for enhancements outside the Bill Limits. The project proposals have been considered against set criteria and proposers invited to present their projects to a formal review. The Group were impressed by the variety of the projects and are satisfied that together they should deliver appropriate enhancement across the project area. The Environmental Enhancement Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State in February 2021. The projects are contingent on Secretary of State approval and Royal Assent.

9. The main projects approved by the group for inclusion in the Environmental Enhancement Plan to be put to the Secretary of State for approval include:  
Biodiversity and landscape enhancements in the Trent Sow floodplain; towpath and access improvements; community garden enhancements; biodiversity and landscape enhancements in the AONB restoring wood pasture; 'Changing Landscape' Arts.  
Smaller Projects include: Revealing Tixall Halls and enhancement of Shugborough Estate Gardens on the boundary facing HS2. The projects will be developed by the proposers and their progress and implementation will be monitored by the Group.

### **Recommendations**

10. (1) The Joint Committee notes progress made on planning matters since the last meeting, (Items a – c).  
(2) Members to note the update on High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2a.