



**Cannock Chase AONB Partnership
AGM and Meeting of the Joint Committee
14th July 2022 at 10.00 AM**

**To be held at the Rising Brook Community Church, Burton Square, Stafford ST17
9LT**

(please park behind the church and not in front of the shops – thank you)

Members of the public are welcome to attend in person.

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1	Election of Chair and Vice Chair This item to be overseen by John Rowe, Honorary Secretary of the Joint Committee	DECISION	
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4	Minutes of the meeting held on 24th March 2022	APPROVAL	<u>3</u>
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6	Finance report <i>(a) To note the final outturn position for 2021-22 for the Core, Sustainable Development Fund, AONB projects, Farming in Protected Landscape programme and the closing balance held on the AONB reserve</i> <i>(b) To approve a revised net revenue budget for 2022-23 and note progress on spend and its current forecast outturn position</i> <i>(c) To note progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme</i> Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee	(a) APPROVAL (b) NOTING (c) NOTING	<u>15</u>
7	Delivery of AONB activities <i>(a) To approve the AONB Annual Review 2021-22</i> <i>(b) To note planned activities for 2022-23</i> Report of the AONB Development Officer	(a) APPROVAL (b) INFORMATION	<u>28</u>
8	Farming in Protected Landscapes <i>To update members on progress delivering the Farming in Protected Landscape programme</i> Report of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer	INFORMATION	<u>33</u>

9	<p>Sustainable Development Fund <i>To update members on project applications and grant awards</i> Report of the AONB Land Management Officer</p>	INFORMATION	<u>37</u>
10	<p>Planning update <i>To update members on AONB input to planning matters</i> Report of the AONB Landscape Planning Officer</p>	INFORMATION	<u>39</u>
11	<p>AONB Management Plan review 2024-29 <i>To approve a revised programme for the preparation of the AONB Management Plan 2024-29</i> Report of the AONB Development Officer</p>	APPROVAL	<u>45</u>
12	<p>Date, time and venue of next meeting <i>Thursday 8th December 2022, Rising Brook Community Church</i></p>	INFORMATION	

Item 4 **Minutes of the meeting held on 24th March 2022**

Item for: Approval

Author: Richard Harris, AONB Land Management Officer

Financial implications: None

Recommendations: The Committee approves the minutes of the meeting and considers any matters arising.



**Cannock Chase AONB Partnership
Meeting of the Joint Committee
Thursday 24th March 2022 at 10.00 AM**

Held at the Rising Brook Community Church, Burton Square, Stafford ST17 9LT

(Draft) minutes

Attendees

Members present

Cllr Frances Beatty (FB)
Cllr Len Bates (LB)
Cllr Victoria Wilson (VW)

Representing

Stafford Borough Council
South Staffordshire District Council
Staffordshire County Council

Officers

Ian Marshall (IM)
Julia Banbury (JB)
Colin Manning (CM)
Richard Harris (RH)
Nikola Mihajlovic (NM)
Sarah Bentley (SB)

AONB Unit
AONB Unit (attended remotely)
AONB Unit
AONB Unit
Staffordshire County Council
Staffordshire County Council

Advisers

Sarah Burgess (SBu)
June Jukes (JJ)
Stuart Latham (SL)

CPRE Staffordshire
Friends of Cannock Chase
SAC Partnership

Public:

Trevor Warburton (TW) Friends of Cannock Chase

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Cllr Beatty opened the meeting and welcomed everyone including members of the public to the meeting of the AONB Partnership Joint Committee.

2. Apologies for absence

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Iain Eadie	Lichfield District Council
Councillor Justin Johnson	Cannock Chase Council
Councillor Adrienne Fitzgerald	Cannock Chase Council
Helena Horton	Lichfield District Council
Steven Stray	Lichfield District Council
Janene Cox	Staffordshire County Council
Mary Cope	NFU/Beaudesert Park Farm
Roger Broadbent	West Midland Bird Club
Wendy Bannerman	British Horse Society
Mark Kelly	Cemex
Hayley Mival	National Trust
Councillor Pat Ansell	Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2021

3.1 Matters arising

- 3.1.1 AONB Annual Conference was held on 3rd March 2022, with the theme 'Changing Perceptions and Behaviours'. The Conference was held online due to the Covid pandemic as two, two-hour slots. Very positive feedback was received. 5 questions were posted to the lunchtime noticeboard during conference for which we asked people to vote in relation to what was a priority. A summary of the top responses follows:

Q. How do we raise the profile of the importance of Cannock Chase for natural beauty and wildlife? A. Top responses included more online information to provide a more balanced overall public perception of the natural importance of the Chase, more Rangers and face to face engagement.

Q. Is there more that could be done to change people's perceptions and encourage positive behaviours towards the Chase? A. Education and be more honest with the information we are putting out.

Q. Should AONBs have an additional statutory purpose to promote public enjoyment and understanding of their special qualities? What are the advantages / disadvantages? A. Most said 'Yes' to this. This is relevant to what is discussed later.

Q. Do you feel that Cannock Chase is inclusive towards all people in society? If not, what are the barriers? A. Barriers around transport, especially if you don't have a car. Wider issues around for example less able, socially disadvantaged, and ethnic minority groups accessing the countryside.

Q. Do you think our visitor welcome needs improving and, if so, how? A. Yes, more signage and interpretation boards, Better waymarking etc.

3.1.2 General comments were received supporting the use of an interactive noticeboard, and this approach would work well for another year.

3.2 **Farming in Protected Landscapes programme**

3.2.1 CM reported that 3 projects had been funded in Year 1. One other has been postponed but hoping to update and defer it into Year 2. Work completed so far includes tree planting and hedgerow tree planting, hedge gapping and fencing to protect hedgerows, pond construction and stream protection for White Clawed crayfish. 2 new projects have been approved at the March Local Assessment Panel around heathland restoration and management and regenerative farming.

3.2.2 Currently discussing other projects from SCC and other landowners for 22-23.

News of the programme is being spread by word of mouth. Hopefully this will speed up the process of getting new applications in.

3.3 **Art in the Landscape Strategy: connecting people to nature through art and culture**

3.3.1 At the last Joint Committee meeting in December the Committee approved and adopted the Art in the Landscape Strategy. Expressions of interest were called for to artists and 30 responses were received. The AONB is looking to make contact with artists to be able to draw out project ideas, looking to develop a suite of projects including an exhibition of local art and workshops on the Chase.

3.3.2 SL mentioned that the SAC project supported Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) art-based education programme, also supported financially by the AONB.

3.3.3 VW raised that during the pandemic there was a 'Crafting Communities' project run by Staffordshire County Council's Libraries and Arts Service in local libraries. She is happy to provide a list of local Artist Makers.

3.4 **Resolved:**

The minutes of the previous meeting are agreed as a correct record and are approved.

3. **Public Questions**

3.1 There were no public questions.

4. **Finance Report – Revenue Budget 2021/22 and 2022/23**

4.1 NM presented the Finance Report.

4.2 The original budget for the AONB for 2021/22 of £192,510 was increased in January 2022 by the offer from Defra of an additional £35,992 of core funding.

4.3 The forecast financial position for the Core and Action Projects Budget shows the nominal net spend to date of £149,447 together with the outturn currently predicted for the year. The predicted outturn for the end of the financial year totals £221,910, giving rise to an anticipated overall underspend of £6,592 for the year. The

underspend is due to lower-than-expected expenditure on AONB staff salaries and travel and subsistence (due to long-term illness of one member of staff and COVID limiting travel).

- 4.4 The latest position available for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for 2021/22 is that Grants have been awarded to four community projects amounting to £4,240 in total. After the administration fee earned by the AONB Unit of £1,000 is deducted, this leaves a balance of £4,760, which has been re-allocated to AONB Projects.
- 4.5 Projects approved amount to £56,087 in total, which gave rise to a projected overspend of £4,945 of which £4,760, is a transfer of funds from the SDF projects. Therefore, the overall forecast is a projected overspend of £185.
- 4.6 The budget for AONB projects at the beginning of the financial year was £15,150 and was increased to £55,902 due to the redistribution of £4,760 of unspent SDF monies and the offer in January 2022 of £35,992 of additional Defra core funding.
- 4.7 This extra funding has facilitated the delivery of a greater range of activities identified in the AONB Business Plan 2021-23 than would otherwise have been possible. These include significant pieces of work around climate change, inclusion, and diversity, and improving our visitor welcome.

Reserve

- 4.8. The balance on the Cannock Chase AONB Reserve currently stands at £62,944 for 2021/22. 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.
- 4.9 These priorities are reviewed annually in December of each year.
- 4.10 It is anticipated that the balance on this reserve at the end of 2021/22 will be £62,944.

Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

- 4.11 Since July 2020 the AONB has been delivering the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme collaborating with farmers and land managers. The funding is for a three-year programme and is provided by Defra and is additional funding on top of the annual core grant that the AONB receives.
- 4.12 The re-profiled budget for the programme allocated a total of £80,000 for year 1 expenditure, comprising programme administration and programme delivery (advice and guidance and grants to support farmers to deliver environmental outcomes). The programme's late announcement limited the available time to develop projects. However, grants have been awarded to four projects that will deliver outcomes for climate change, nature, landscape and people within the AONB.

- 4.13 The predicted outturn for the programme at the end of the financial year £71,766, an underspend of £8,234. The forecast underspend of £8,234 is now £14,708. A further £6,474 underspend is due to planned projects not being delivered. This is due to unforeseen illness, one of the applicants will be unable to deliver and claim for all their approved activities before 31 March 2022. Under Defra rules any unspent monies must be repaid back and cannot be carried forward.
- 4.14 CM explained that the owner got Covid and there were problems with supply during the pandemic. We are not alone in this. LB asked if we could go back to Defra and say we had problems due to Covid and ask for the money? CM responded that FiPL had already made representations and determined there was no way to retain the money. LB has to say it is disappointing and raised that Covid has played a part and perhaps to look at this again.
- 4.15 FB asked about the funding for 2022/23. CM provided a figure of £288,000.
- 4.16 The Joint Committee noted it was a really difficult time. VW mentioned that FiPL has been really successful and thanked everyone involved. It was commented that an overall balanced budget given these circumstances was rather remarkable.

Defra Grant Settlement

- 4.17 IM mentioned that Ministers have now approved a 14.7% uplift in the Defra settlement for AONBs next year and provisionally for years 2 and 3.
- 4.18 Our uplift is likely to be around £22K. We will have to decide where within the budget to allocate the uplift. The Grant is conditional on securing 25% locally – in our case from the 5 local authorities. If we wish to allocate it to core funding then the contributions from local authorities would need to proportionately matched. If instead, the uplift was allocated to AONB Projects of SDF, then the Local Authority contribution would stay the same.
- 4.19 There hasn't been a raise in Local Authority contributions in 14 years. LB mentioned that he didn't think it unreasonable to go back to local authorities. FB agreed. Take advice and wait and see what the sums are. SB mentioned that SCC gives 50% of the 25% split. Each local authority contribution uses a set formula to calculate its contribution based on area and population.
- 4.20 NM to provide calculation to show what Local Authority contributions would look like.
- 4.21 IM's recommendation is to use the uplift to increase the AONB Team's capacity and skills in communication. **Action:** This proposal was supported in principle.

4.22 Resolved:

- (1) That the Committee noted the progress on the net revenue budget for 2021/22.**
- (2) That the Committee noted progress on the spend for the FIPL programme.**

5. Government Response to the Landscapes Review

- 5.1 IM provided a report on the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership's suggested response to the Government Response to the Landscapes Review for consideration.
- 5.2 The original Landscapes Review was published in September 2019. IM felt the Landscapes Review was a very good, thorough report. The Government Response was issued on 15 January 2022 as a consultation document. The Cannock Chase AONB Partnership's suggested response is set out in the Appendix of the Joint Committee published papers.
- 5.3 Responding to the Government's consultation document the suggested response of the AONB Partnership was that we tried to follow that of the National Association of Areas Outstanding Natural Beauty. The crux is the proposal for a new purpose for public enjoyment and understanding. It involves new powers, purposes and renaming AONBs as National Landscapes. We support the national position but with a local emphasis.

Purpose

- 5.4 1st Purpose - more aligned, more for nature, climate change and connecting people. We are favourable to this. If Government wants us to have the 2nd purpose it is a big ask. In dealing with landscapes, it is important scenic beauty mustn't be lost. FB mentioned that as recommended in the Landscapes Review by Julian Glover we must continue to use the word 'beauty'. This is emphasised by Dame Fiona Reynolds in her relevant book 'The Fight for Beauty'. More for nature at landscape scale.
- 5.5 IM asked about the use of the term 'Natural Capital' and questioned whether this was an enduring term?
- 5.6 2nd purpose is around public enjoyment and understanding. There would need to be a clear policy statement that where conflicts occur between conserving and enhancing natural beauty and recreation, natural beauty should take priority (i.e., the 'Sandford Principle').
- 5.7 Protected Landscapes support responsible authorities in preparing and delivering Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). Staffordshire County Council are putting a plan together, and as a "responsible authority" will lead on its preparation. The AONB should link into that rather than start from scratch. We are aware of the LNRS Duty. Comment made there is no point of the AONB reinventing the wheel.
- 5.9 There are parts of Glover Review that didn't feature in the Government response e.g. Every child has a night under the stars, new AONBs going forward, new national forest, new designation process. It is felt these were peripheral, not core issues.
- 5.10 Decision: Support the position set out by IM.

Powers

- 5.11 With respect to the planning reform, comment was made we need a strong response on this.

- 5.12 FB mentioned that CPRE have done work on Dark Skies. CPRE have carried out a follow up survey with light meters. Need to do a bit more to promote AONB as a place to go for dark skies, reduce domestic light pollution.
- 5.13 SL raised it is important that the Sandford Principle has to be embedded or there may be conflict with the SAC. SB - The Sandford Principle is written into primary legislation. It should be embedded so it is absolutely clear. Cultural heritage written is also in there. All about natural beauty. When it comes to the Cultural landscape some landowners have tried to wriggle out of their responsibility.
- 5.14 IM raised that the Duty to have regard is weak, almost meaningless. More up to date guidance on writing management plans is needed. The existing Guidance is 20 years out of date.
- 5.15 With respect to Planning reform AONB Teams to be granted statutory consultee status. IM stated we support 1. to have 'special regard' at least, support 2. to shape and inform the management plan. IM asked JB if she had anything to add? JB responded IM is right to support direction of being a statutory consultee. In making responses in policy/planning applications higher regard can be given to the AONB and the importance of it.
- 5.16 VW felt the term 'have regard' was very outdated and wishy-washy, 'special regard' is still not strong enough.
- 5.17 SB raised looking at the legal definition. 'Further the purposes' might be better. Look at best terminology. Get an SCC lawyer to look at it? A suggestion was made to use the NAAONB terminology.
- 5.18 With respect to the 2019-24 cycle and refresh of management plans a number of questions were posed; Do we wait for the new guidance? Should we put the current cycle put back a year? Does this need to be agreed with NE? No decision reached at this point.
- 5.19 Decision: Support the position set out by IM.

Resources

- 5.20 The Government don't propose doubling of AONB funding. Instead, private finance could be considered to make up shortfall. New Local Nature Partnership to co-ordinate. The proposed new funding model with more diverse sources of funding, such as private finance for nature-based solutions and a role for the new landscapes partnership to harness commercial and sponsorship opportunities does not provide protected landscapes with the certainty they need to plan ahead. There is also concern that private investors could influence management decisions or that they use their investment to offset their environmental impact elsewhere. Private investors (even if they are forthcoming) will want to see a return for their investment on the ground – they will not want to core fund as that support is invisible.
- 5.21 We welcome the need for more resources but disappointed as 14% increase is not enough to deliver the new burdens. We request that we are fully funded immediately. Private financing won't make up the shortfall.

- 5.22 LB – referring to Planning, Patrick Walker has attended our meeting in the past. Can we please speak to Patrick as he maybe able to give assistance?
- 5.23 FB pointed out this is a big decision. Happy with the suggestions that IM has put forward.
- 5.24 FB - (in relation to funding) CIC is not going to pay for core funding so it is a non-starter.
- 5.25 SB Types of finance model suggested aren't applicable to the AONB as it doesn't own any land, so no assets you can generate income from. It might achieve projects but won't core fund.
- 5.26 Decision: support the position set out by IM.

Governance

- 5.27 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an outdated term. AONBs to be renamed as National Landscapes. CCAONB have jumped the gun on this as we use this in the Place Brand and call ourselves a National Landscape. Comments were that we are really impressed with the way people have got behind the Place Brand for Cannock Chase. The renaming proposals is divisive amongst AONBs, but we embrace it. We will still be called the AONB Partnership but are united behind National Landscapes.
- 5.28 JJ mentioned that AONB is not fit for purpose. She has to explain what AONB stands for/is all the time. SBu suggestion was to use National Scenic Area.
- 5.29 Decision: support the position set out by IM.
- 5.30 FB asked if members have to time to take away, read and make comments. IM raised that the response needs to be returned by 9th April. FB advised he does not need to bring it back to Joint Committee.
- 5.31 **Action:** send response over to MPs (Michael Fabricant, Amanda Milling, Gavin Williamson). FB is happy to meet up with them.

5.32 Resolved:

That the Committee approves the position statement of the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership

6. Planning update

- 6.1 JB provided a summary. Between November 2021 and March 2022, the Landscape Planning Officer reviewed 39 planning applications, and made representations to 1 Planning Inspectorate Appeal, 1 Local Plan consultation, 1 non-statutory consultation from Natural England and 1 pre-application consultation. One application was classified as major development associated with retail development in Cannock district. Seven consultations related to amended applications in response to previous objections. Twelve applications did not need a full response as there were no concerns to raise.
- 6.2 HS2 press release issued on 1st March announcing the Environmental Enhancement Plan developed by the Trent Sow Group had been approved by the Secretary of

State. The Plan involves 6 projects delivered over 2 years, 2 of which will be commencing shortly. Due to Covid pandemic some projects couldn't be taken forward.

- 6.3 There is a page on the AONB website for the Trent Sow Group and the Environmental Enhancement Plan can be downloaded from there. Early Environmental Works have commenced near Ingestre. Fixed-Point Photography will be monitoring the effects of HS2 and members of the group have been examining suitable locations to be included in the project for this purpose.
- 6.4 LB raised that he was a bit concerned about the entrance to Essex gardens as it has a padlock on it. This relates to the Essex bridge entrance. JB responded she doesn't know the detail but does know the gate and it is locked. This may be associated with lockdown, but possibly pre-dates that? LB mentioned this gate should be open to the public. **Action:** JB to follow up with National Trust, Shugborough.
- 6.5 Thanks extended to JB for Planning Design Guide and report.
- 6.6 SL raised a question in relation to the Connecting Towpaths project. The Canal and River Trust (CRT) have been in touch again. Part of CRT bigger scheme to improve towpaths. Funding for this stretch from HS2. Approaching SAC for funding the rest? JB said there are actually 3 phases, HS2 Environmental Enhancement funding is contributing towards one section, but not sure of CRT's proposals for funding for other phases. JB to go back to them for clarity. SL wants to ensure double funding is avoided.

6.7 Resolved:

That the Committee noted progress on planning matters and High Speed Two Phase 2a

7. Inclusion and Diversity Study

- 7.1 IM - Following a competitive procurement process a commission has been awarded to A Meredith Associates and The Research Solution to carry out an Inclusion and Diversity Study. The project will undertake new primary research, targeting specific ethnic minority groups. You will all receive an email from A Meredith Associates shortly seeking to understand the breadth of diversity within the Partnership and you are encouraged to respond. The Glover report has made strong emphasis that landscapes are for everyone.
- 7.2 Souvenir brochure the AONB is producing is relevant to all aspects of society. Artworks relevant to all. The story about Nightjar relates to Africa because that is where the birds overwinter. There is a need to reach out to refugee communities. Through the interviews there will be an opportunity for all to have their say. SL mentioned it is not about stopping people from coming to the Chase but using it responsibly.

7.3 Resolved:

That the Committee noted the report and progress made

8. Carbon Baseline Study

- 8.1 IM presented an update to members on a study to improve understanding of the AONB's carbon footprint, the main sources of emissions, and ways in which emissions can be removed. Speaking to Cllr Bates we have started to tackle this issue. Things have aligned to enable us to take this forward e.g. Defra money. There is a national move for National Landscapes to do to achieve net zero. We are 'jumping the gun' and are in the first tranche of AONBs to carry out this type of study.
- 8.2. Small World Consulting is currently undertaking a carbon footprint assessment for all of the UK's national parks as well as several AONBs. The programme builds on a decade-long collaboration between SWC and the Lake District National Park and aims to scale up the efforts by the protected landscapes to contribute to meeting the UK's 2050 net zero target.
- 8.3 The AONB have appointed Small World Consulting to carry out a Carbon baseline study. The method is to use a standard methodology applied across all protected landscapes to:
- Calculate Cannock Chase AONB's existing carbon footprint
 - Identify the main sources of emissions
 - Propose emission reduction targets across the key components of the total carbon footprint that could be influenced the most through AONB partnerships
 - Identify land-based measures to sequester carbon alongside broader benefits such as biodiversity gains and improved flood resilience.

The study will enable us to identify carbon reduction and storage projects that can fulfil the 'mitigation' element of the proposed climate mitigation and adaptation plan for Cannock Chase AONB.

- 8.4 The study will get us to think how do we can influence carbon capture and carbon storage, or alternatively do we rely on national policy? The other part of the equation is the existing carbon habitats store, and carbon they capture. IM showed a table produced by SWC showing suggested land use options and the associated additions to annual sequestration fluxes (tCO₂e/yr added each year) for Cannock Chase. In the AONB we have 40% woodland cover. Peatland is a great sink, but we don't have much.
- 8.5 IM also showed 2 pie charts entitled i) Preliminary Results: Residents GHG emissions in Cannock Chase AONB by percentage; and ii) Preliminary Results: Visitors GHG emissions while in (top) and on the way to & from (bottom) Cannock Chase AONB by percentage. Savings could be made through land use changes. What can we do to influence people's behaviour? Maybe just education?
- 8.6 It was queried whether these are realistic targets? Amount of land is tough to crack. VW pointed out that other shrubs can be planted along grass verges.
- 8.7 CM mentioned there could be an increase in Clover through FiPL. One project has been approved already involving herbal ley on area of farmland. Better for livestock

and capture carbon. No ploughing options do not release carbon. Again, a question was raised are these targets realistic?

- 8.8 SB commented we need to take constraints into account. We need to consider other valuable habitats and archaeology. Extrapolate national target to get to net zero. We need to approach this issue taking a top down and bottom up approach together.
- 8.9 We need a conversation with SWC over the first set of results. Are they using national data and not using local data? How we factor in local constraints? A separate meeting or at next meeting, query the data with LAs/Land owners. Have a conversation about can we achieve that is realistic?
- 8.10 **Action:** LB asked if Small World Consulting come along and talk to us.
- 8.11 IM said that SWC will produce a first assessment, this will be shared and presented virtually then we can quiz them. FB would like to see the findings in advance. It would be best would if we could meet SWC face-to-face.
- 8.12 SL - can we meet unrealistic targets of 35 ha a year? What happens to management. Deer destroys trees, squirrels too. That could mean we lose planted trees. IM commented what if planting fails or gets eaten – there will be need to replant with a carbon cost. National data sets don't take account of quality of local data sets.
- 8.13 FB asked do we want to expand trees? FC are key player. VW commented it is not just about trees and feels a neglected asset could be the public highway. For example, Cotoneasters are 20% more successful for capturing carbon.

8.14 Resolved:

That the Committee noted the report and progress made

9. AOB

- 9.1 Friends of Cannock Chase have not met due to Covid. AGM on Saturday. A shortened programme has been put together. People welcome to join. Apologies given from JJ as she will not be able to attend the July AGM.
- 9.2 FB closed the meeting and thanked people for their attendance.

10. Date, time and venue of next meeting

Thursday 14th July 2022 (AGM)

Thursday 8th December 2022

Both at Rising Brook Community Church

Item 5

Public questions

Item for:	Questions received (in advance) from members of the public
Author:	None
Financial implications:	None
Recommendations:	The Committee notes the questions and is invited to respond.

Item 6 Finance report – Revenue Budget 2022/23

Item for: Approving and Noting

Author: Nikki Mihajlovic, Senior Finance Business Partner

Financial implications: The Joint Committee in its role under the AONB Partnership Agreement is responsible for the management of the core funding from Defra and the co-ordination of partner projects.

Recommendations:

1. That the final outturn position for 2021/22 for the Core, Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), AONB Projects, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme and the closing balance held on the AONB reserve are noted.
2. That the revised net revenue budget is approved and progress on the current net revenue budget for 2022/23 and its current forecast outturn position are noted.
3. That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is noted.

Background

1. The net revenue budget for 2022/23 was approved by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 6 December 2021. In the absence at that time of any announcement from Defra about our core grant settlement, core AONB costs were kept unchanged at their 2021/22 funding levels.
2. Defra has now confirmed the funding settlement for Cannock Chase for 2022/23 is £172,752.39, and that the terms of the new Grant Agreement will be backdated to 1 April 2022. This represents a 14.7% increase from 2021/22. This is confirmed as an additional £22,083.39 in 2022/23 and is indicative for years 2023/24 and 2024/25. The grant is conditional on the AONB securing additional funding equivalent to at least 25% of our core expenditure. The five local authorities within Cannock Chase AONB have agreed that their financial contributions for 2022/23 will also increase by 14.7% and that the total increase in the core budget will be earmarked for the appointment of a new (part-time) Communications Officer.
3. This paper presents progress on a revised net revenue budget for 2022/23, and its current forecast outturn position. The recommendations represent an effective way to continue to carry forward the implementation of the Management Plan for the Cannock Chase AONB Partnership.

Final Outturn 2021/22

4. The detailed final net revenue outturn for 2021/22 for Core, Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), and AONB Projects is set out in Appendix 1 and is compared to the £228,502 approved budget for the year. The final net revenue spend was £233,083 compared to budget resulting in an initial overspend of £4,581. Additional Contributions were received from Stafford Borough Council to contribute towards RAF Hednesford

and Brindley Health totally £8,000. After taking account of these contributions, this resulted in an underspend of £3,419 which has been transferred into the AONB reserve.

5. The individual projects, totalling £4,869 for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) including the £1,000 administration fee, are set out in Appendix 2. This shows the re-allocation of funds to the AONB projects of £5,131.
6. The individual projects, totalling £65,880 for the AONB Projects are set out in Appendix 3. The projects show an overspend when compared to the original budget of £14,738, which was funded from the re-allocation of funds to the SDF of £5,131, a contribution from the SAC Partnership of £8,000 and a re-allocation of funds from the Core budget of £1,607.
7. The detailed net position for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is set out in Appendix 4 and is compared to the original budget of £80,000. The final spend against the programme was £64,837, which resulted in an underspend against the grant of £15,163, which will have to be repaid.

Revenue Budget update 2022/23

8. The original budget for the AONB for 2022/23 of £192,510, which was previously approved by the Joint Committee at the March 2022 meeting has been increased by £29,440 to £221,950 to reflect the additional Defra core funding and Local Authority contributions, as set out in Appendix 5. The current forecast outturn position when compared to budget is a forecast underspend of £42.
9. With the agreement of the local authorities to utilise this additional funding to recruit a part-time Communications Officer for the AONB, the majority of this £29,440 has been allocated to salaries, with small increases to training expenses, travel and subsistence to reflect an additional member of staff. This has left a small amount remaining which has been allocated to print & publicity budgets.
10. The level of funding for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and AONB Projects has been left unchanged.
11. The individual projects against the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for 2022/23 are set out in Appendix 6, with projects approved or committed amounting to £3,764, including £1,000 administration fee deduction which leaves a balance of £6,236 unallocated. Within the figure quoted above grants have been awarded to two community projects amounting to £2,164. More detail about the Sustainable Development Fund is provided under Agenda Item 9.
12. The individual projects against the AONB Projects for 2022/23 are set out in Appendix 7, with projects approved or committed amounting to £12,500 in total, which leaves a balance of £2,650 unallocated.

Reserve

13. The balance on the Cannock Chase AONB Reserve at the end of the financial year 2021/22 stood at £66,406, after transfers in of HS2 funding, SDF administration fees.

Underspend against the core budget and interest accrued. The reserve currently stands at £67,050 for 2022/23. A summary of the Reserve is attached as Appendix 8.

14. 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.
15. These priorities are reviewed annually in December of each year.
16. Preparatory work (evidence and insight) to inform the AONB Management Plan review 2024-29 may need to be commissioned this financial year. A special meeting of the AONB Officer Working Group is to be convened this autumn to assess the requirements and scope any such studies. It is proposed that the costs of these studies are drawn from the AONB Reserve, with Joint Committee approval.

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

17. Since July 2020 the AONB has been delivering the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme collaborating with farmers and land managers. The funding is for a three-year programme and is provided by Defra and is additional funding on top of the annual core grant that the AONB receives.
18. A summary of the budget position for the programme is attached as Appendix 9. The predicted outturn for the programme at the end of the financial year is £289,620. More detail about the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is provided under Agenda Item 8.

Equalities Implications

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

Legal Implications

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

Resource and Value for Money Implications

21. 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.

Risk Implications

22. 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.

Recommendations

23. The following recommendations are made to the Joint Committee:

1. That the final outturn position for 2021/22 for the Core, Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), AONB Projects, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme and the closing balance held on the AONB reserve are noted.
2. That the revised net revenue budget is approved and progress on the current net revenue budget for 2022/23 and its current forecast outturn position are noted.
3. That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is noted.

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Cannock Chase AONB Core & Project Costs

Outturn for 2021/2022

	Budget	Outturn	Variance
	£	£	£
Core Budget			
Salaries	136,260	135,064	-1,196
Training Expenses	1,510	3,095	1,585
Travel and Subsistence	2,200	283	-1,917
Staff and Associated Costs	139,970	138,442	-1,528
Office Equipment	2,600	5,744	3,144
Annual Audit	400	0	-400
Volunteer Costs	500	0	-500
National Liaison	3,160	3,156	-4
Print & Publicity	5,000	4,364	-636
AONB Website	0	0	0
Annual Conference	2,000	1,628	-372
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	4,730	0	-4,730
Partnership Running Costs	9,000	9,000	0
Core Budget Subtotal	167,360	162,334	-5,026
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	4,869	-5,131
AONB Projects	51,142	65,880	14,738
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	228,502	233,083	4,581
New Projects to be developed	0	0	0
Anticipated Forecast Outturn as at 31 March 2022	228,502	233,083	4,581
Funded By:			
DEFRA Grant			
Core	-125,520	-125,520	0
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	-10,000	0
AONB Projects	-15,150	-15,150	0
Additional Projects Allocation	-35,992	-35,992	0
DEFRA Grant Subtotal	-186,662	-186,662	0
Local Authority Contributions			
Lichfield District Council	-2,090	-2,090	0
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,090	-2,090	0
Cannock Chase District Council	-8,370	-8,370	0
Stafford Borough Council	-8,370	-8,370	0
Staffordshire County Council	-20,920	-20,920	0
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-41,840	-41,840	0
Sales and Donations	0	0	0
SBC RAF Hednesford Contribution	0	-5,000	-5,000
SBC Brindley Heath Contribution	0	-3,000	-3,000
Membership Fee Income	0	0	0
Funding from(+)/to reserve(-)	0	3,419	3,419
Total Funding	-228,502	-233,083	-4,581

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Sustainable Development Fund

Outturn for 2021/22

	Budget £	Outturn £	Variance £
Approved Projects			
Gentleshaw Common interpretation panels	2,917	2,917	0
Quinquennial breeding bird survey for Cannock Chase (phase 1)	574	574	0
Nature in Brocton Park	258	258	0
Apples on the Chase: a Chase Through Time legacy project & Association of Friends of Cannock - Camera Lens	120	120	0
Approved Projects Total	3,869	3,869	0
Admin Fees	1,000	1,000	0
Re-allocation of Funds to AONB Projects	5,131	5,131	0
TOTAL	10,000	10,000	0

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

AONB Projects

Outturn for 2021/2022

	Budget £	Outturn £	Variance £
Approved Projects			
Contribution to Art in the Landscape programme	5,000	5,000	0
Contribution to awareness programme for young people	5,000	5,000	0
Report of nightjar surveys (2019-2021)	3,000	3,000	0
Assessment of local geological sites	500	500	0
Adder genetics study	260	260	0
Great War Hut visitor welcome (flags and replacement of picket fence and gates)	2,486	2,486	0
AONB visitor welcome (improved interpretation)	1,494	1,494	0
Carbon Baseline Study	1,100	1,100	0
Art in the Landscape Workshop	600	600	0
AONB Website Refresh	7,000	7,000	0
Inclusion and Diversity Study	12,667	27,405	14,738
Deer Impact Study	4,910	4,910	0
Souvenir Booklet Design and Artwork	2,000	2,000	0
Small World Consulting	5,125	5,125	0
Approved Projects Total	51,142	65,880	14,738
Original Budget	15,150	15,150	0
Re-allocation of Funds from SDF Projects	0	5,131	5,131
Reallocation of Funds from Core Budget	0	1,607	1,607
Additional DEFRA Funding	35,992	35,992	0
SAC Partnership Contribution	0	8,000	8,000
Approved Projects Total	51,142	65,880	14,738

Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant

Outturn for 2021/2022

	Budget	Outturn	Variance
	£	£	£
Farming in Protected Landscapes Expenditure:			
Programme Administration	25,290	52,903	27,613
Programme Delivery (Advice & Guidance & grants)	54,710	11,934	-42,776
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	80,000	64,837	-15,163
Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant	-80,000	-106,837	-26,837
Funding Carried forward into 22/23	0	42,000	42,000
Total Funding	0	0	0

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Cannock Chase AONB Core & Project Costs

Forecast for 2022/2023

	Budget	Actual	Predicted Outturn	Variance
	£	£	£	£
Core Budget				
Salaries	169,200	23,957	157,908	-11,292
Training Expenses	2,510	0	2,510	0
Travel and Subsistence	3,200	39	3,200	0
Staff and Associated Costs	174,910	23,996	163,618	-11,292
Office Equipment	1,400	-7	1,400	0
Annual Audit	0	0	0	0
Volunteer Costs	500	0	500	0
National Liaison	3,160	2,789	3,160	0
Print & Publicity	4,110	765	15,360	11,250
AONB Website	0	0	0	0
Annual Conference	2,000	0	2,000	0
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	1,720	0	1,720	0
Partnership Running Costs	9,000	0	9,000	0
Core Budget Subtotal	196,800	27,543	196,758	-42
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	0	10,000	0
AONB Projects	15,150	0	15,150	0
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	221,950	27,544	221,908	-42
New Projects to be developed	0	0	0	0
Anticipated Forecast Outturn as at 31 March 2022	221,950	27,544	221,908	-42

Funded By:				
DEFRA Grant				
Core	-147,600	0	-147,600	0
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	0	-10,000	0
AONB Projects	-15,150	0	-15,150	0
Additional Projects Allocation	0	0	0	0
DEFRA Grant Subtotal	-172,750	0	-172,750	0
Local Authority Contributions				
Lichfield District Council	-2,460	0	-2,460	0
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,460	0	-2,460	0
Cannock Chase District Council	-9,840	0	-9,840	0
Stafford Borough Council	-9,840	0	-9,840	0
Staffordshire County Council	-24,600	0	-24,558	42
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-49,200	0	-49,158	42
Sales and Donations	0	0	0	0
Membership Fee Income	0	0	0	0
Funding from(+)/to reserve(-)	0	0	0	0
Total Funding	-221,950	0	-221,908	42

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Sustainable Development Fund

Budget Update for 2022/23

	Budget	Spent or Committed to Date	Predicted Outturn	Variance
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects				
Long-eared owl audio survey	600	0	600	0
Quinquennial breeding bird survey for Cannock Chase (phase 2)	2,164	0	2,164	0
Approved Projects Total	2,764	0	2,764	0
Admin Fees	1,000	0	1,000	0
Currently Unallocated	6,236	0	6,236	0
TOTAL	10,000	0	10,000	0

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

AONB Projects

Budget Update for 2022/2023

	Budget	Spent or Committed to Date	Predicted Outturn	Variance
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects				
Contribution to Art in the Landscape programme (yr2)	5,000	0	5,000	0
Contribution to awareness programme for young people (yr2)	5,000	0	5,000	0
Deer census (phase 2)	2,500	0	2,500	0
				0
				0
Approved Projects Total	12,500	0	12,500	0
Currently Unallocated	2,650	0	2,650	0
Re-allocation of Funds from SDF Projects	0	0	0	0
Additional DEFRA Funding	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	15,150	0	15,150	0

Cannock Chase AONB Reserve

Financial Year	Opening Balance	Income/ Donations	Membership Fees	Visitor Survey Work	Admin Fees	Transfer to/from Reserve	Balance of Admin Fees / Underspends	Interest	Closing Balance
	£	£		£	£	£	£	£	£
2007/2008	10,214					-1,766	-1,766		8,448
2008/2009	8,448	572			9,303	-1,590	7,713		16,733
2009/2010	16,733	1,326			6,166	-371	5,795		23,854
2010/2011	23,854	896	525	9,564	4,744	-921	3,823		38,662
2011/2012	38,662	1,240	1,367	17,845	3,983	-4,204	-221		58,893
2012/2013	58,893	387	1,108		3,218	-533	2,685	195	63,270
2013/2014	63,270	1,001	1,675		2,459	0	2,459	249	68,654
2014/2015	68,654	596	1,720		1,327	-54	1,273	289	72,532
2015/2016	72,532		569		500	-2,383	-1,883	293	71,512
2016/2017	71,512	1,475	553		1,565	-108	1,457	132	75,129
2017/2018	75,129	1,471	52		1,809	30,703	32,512	189	109,353
2018/2019	109,353	169	104		2,056	34,361	36,417	685	146,728
2019/2020	146,728				2,307	-94,792	-92,485	577	54,819
2020/2021	54,819				1,307	0	1,307	78	56,204
2021/2022	56,204	5,740			1,000	3,418	4,418	44	66,406
2022/2023	66,406	644					0		67,050
		15,519	7,673	27,409	41,744	-38,240	3,504	2,731	67,050

Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant

Forecast for 2022/2023

	Budget	Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variance
	£	£	£	£
Farming in Protected Landscapes Expenditure:				
Programme Administration	25,290	5,177	25,290	0
Programme Advice & Guidance	42,993	0	42,993	0
Project Spend	221,337	29,301	221,337	0
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	289,620	34,479	289,620	0
Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant	-289,620	-42,000	-289,620	0
Total Funding	0	-7,521	0	0

Item 7 Delivery of AONB activities

- Item for:** (a) Approval
(b) Information
- Author:** Ian Marshall, AONB Development Officer
- Financial implications:** Provision for desktop publishing the Annual Review is allowed within the AONB budget
- Recommendations:**
1. The Committee approves the AONB Annual Review 2021-22
 2. The Committee notes the planned activities for 2022-23 and is invited to ask questions.

Background

1. Our Business Plan gives details of how the AONB Partnership itself, notably through its dedicated AONB staff team, operates to deliver its contract with Defra and the commitments in our Management Plan (2019-24).
2. The current Business Plan covers the two-year period (2021-23). Our achievements in the first year of this plan are summarised in the appended Annual Review 2021-22, which is presented to Members for approval.
3. The rest of this paper updates members on our planned activities for the second year of the plan, 2022-23, and is presented for information and comment.

Annual Review 2021-22

4. The production of an Annual Review summarising the year's achievements of the AONB Partnership provides an opportunity to:
 - Record formally the Partnership's successes in delivering our core purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Cannock Chase
 - Demonstrate our ability to deliver through examples of our work
 - Showcase what we are about, and why partners would want to work with us
 - Provide financial details of the Partnership and its ability to manage its financial affairs
 - Raise our profile nationally to Defra, that we offer value for money, and that we are contributing within the AONB family to the national agenda for protected landscapes.
5. The AONB Annual Review for 2021-22 is attached separately to the agenda papers and highlights a selection of the key activities we have delivered under the themes set out in our AONB Management Plan:

Landscape character and planning

In the first year of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme we have awarded £32,100 to 3 projects. 6 projects have received funding from HS2 for

environmental enhancements totalling £1.5 million to help integrate the new railway in the landscape.

Wildlife and nature

A specialist geologist has reassessed the condition of the 5 Local Geological Sites on Cannock Chase AONB and made recommendations for their management. To better understand the deer on Cannock Chase and inform a strategy for their management a deer census and impact study have been carried out. Led by the Woodland Trust, a 1-day training course for landowners and practitioners was held to improve our understanding of veteran trees and how to manage them for their ecological, historical and landscape values.

Historic environment and culture

Chase Through Time volunteers have been locating and recording the apple trees on the Chase, trying to shed light on why we have so many. Conservation works to an historic brick wall - one of the last surviving features of the RAF assault course - have been completed by Staffordshire County Council.

Experience and enjoyment

A new voluntary code to help protect Cannock Chase features 12 ways that visitors and residents can help care for Cannock Chase. It has been adopted by the AONB Partnership, SAC Partnership, public and charitable landowners, emergency services and local authorities. A new welcome leaflet and souvenir brochure have been produced to improve our visitor welcome. Our AONB promoted walks have been reviewed with the support of the Ramblers, and the outcome is a new series of walks that will help to disperse visitor pressure to less well-known and visited parts of the Chase.

Communities and business

The Cannock Chase AONB and SAC Partnerships have joined forces to produce a range of interactive learning resource materials to raise children and young people's awareness and appreciation of Cannock Chase. In 2021-22 the AONB Partnership awarded £4,250 to 4 local community groups through the AONB Sustainable Development Fund. The AONB Joint Committee has formally adopted the national Arts in the Landscape Strategy commissioned by the National Association for AONBs. The AONB is beginning to reach out to local artists and art producers to discuss how we can develop collaborative local arts projects that use the arts to encourage greater understanding and emotional attachment to the AONB.

Governance and communication

In March we responded positively to the Government's response to the Landscapes Review, and look forward to strengthening AONBs as exemplars of 21st century designated landscapes. The AONB Partnership has begun a major piece of work to explore and understand who does and doesn't get the opportunity to visit and connect with Cannock Chase. The study is also investigating how inclusive and diverse the governance structure and operations of the AONB Partnership are. To inform our understanding of how Cannock Chase can contribute to the climate

change emergency we have prepared a carbon footprint assessment for the AONB and proposed a pathway by which the AONB could get to net zero. Our AONB Annual Conference was held online on 3rd March, and discussed issues around visitor management on the Chase and how we can change people's perceptions and encourage positive behaviours.

Planned activities for 2022-23

6. A wide range of activities is planned for the second year of our current Business Plan, and the key items are listed here for members' information.

Landscape character and planning

- Continue to input landscape advice to planning policy and development management, including Commonwealth Games and HS2 enabling works and design development.
- Publish and circulate revised Highways Design Guide.
- Publish and circulate Good Lighting Guide.
- Explore with statutory undertakers further opportunities for undergrounding powerlines.
- Continue to build relationships with farmers and land managers through the Farming in Protected Landscape programme, and spend year 2 grant allocation.
- Continue to monitor the landscape through the Fixed Point Photography project, and provide support to volunteers.

Wildlife and nature

- Work with Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and others to develop a nature recovery plan for Cannock Chase as part of the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Staffordshire.
- Make owners of local County Wildlife Sites, Local Geological Sites and grazing initiatives aware of funding opportunities through the Farming in Protected Landscape programme.
- Work with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to continue to monitor access and habitat improvements on Gentleshaw Common SSSI through the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- Scope a future unimproved grassland inventory.
- Support West Midland Bird Club with the second phase of the 2022 Cannock Chase bird survey.
- Progress conservation actions for priority species (crayfish, bats, invertebrates, nightjars and long-eared owls) through sub-group meetings.
- Scope requirements for adder audit.
- Scope requirements for surveys of key invertebrates and early successional species.
- In collaboration with Woodland Trust promote recording of veteran trees with volunteers.
- Commission second deer census and, together with findings from deer activity survey, use findings to inform scope for deer management strategy.

- Update records of priority invasive species and identify opportunities for control programmes through Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Historic environment and culture

- Review and finalise the draft heritage strategy.
- Work with landowners to consolidate surviving trig points on the Chase.
- Seek opportunities to celebrate the cultural heritage of Cannock Chase through improved access and interpretation measures.
- Work with Historic England and the County Archaeologist to support and co-ordinate volunteers to assess the condition of the 7 Scheduled Monuments on the Chase.
- Work with the National Trust to support and co-ordinate volunteers to assess the condition of priority non-designated heritage assets on the Chase.

Experience and enjoyment

- Distribute Welcome leaflet, Walking Cannock Chase leaflets, and souvenir brochure to visitor centres/hubs and other outlets.
- Deliver AONB presence at Commonwealth Games mountain biking event spectator hub, and press packs.
- Scope requirements for production of a video celebrating Cannock Chase.
- Continue to support the SAC Partnership to implement the car park and site user implementation plans.
- Continue input to 'Local Cultural Place Makers, Global Change Makers' local arts programme with young people.
- Collaborate with artists to develop local arts projects.

Communities and business

- Re-draft AONB volunteer policy, promote volunteering opportunities on the Chase, and recruit new volunteers.
- Assess with landowners the appetite/need/feasibility for a new AONB-wide Visitor Support Volunteer role, and scope.
- Working with SAC Partnership, deliver resource materials for scouts/guides, DofE and Libraries for 'Future Guardians of Cannock Chase' project.
- Liaise with businesses to promote the Cannock Chase sense of place toolkit.
- Present findings of Diversion and Inclusion study to Officer Working Group and Joint Committee and take forward recommendations.

Governance and communication

- Submit interim and final claims to Defra with supporting monitoring reports.
- Hold meetings of the AONB Joint Committee, Officer Working Group and Task and Finish Groups, as required.
- Organise AONB Annual Conference.
- Prepare AONB Annual Review 2022-23.
- Attend NAAONB Annual Conference 12-15 September 2022, Chairmen's Conference, lead officer and other national and regional meetings.

- Present findings of Carbon Baseline Assessment for Cannock Chase to Officer Working Group and Joint Committee and take forward recommendations.
- Scope and prepare climate change adaptation plan for Cannock Chase.
- Recruit part-time AONB Communications Officer.
- Raise the profile of Cannock Chase and the work of the AONB Partnership through all communication channels.

Recommendations

7. The following recommendations are made to the Joint Committee:
 1. The Committee approves the AONB Annual Review 2022-23
 2. The Committee notes the planned activities for 2022-23 and is invited to ask questions.

Item 8 Farming in Protected Landscapes

Item for:	Information
Author:	Colin Manning, Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer
Financial implications:	The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) grant settlement for Cannock Chase AONB for 2022/23 is £289,620
Recommendations:	The Committee notes the report and is invited to ask questions.

Background

1. The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (2021-24) is part of Defra's Agricultural Transition Plan. It offers funding to farmers and land managers in England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and National Parks for projects that:
 - Support nature recovery
 - Mitigate the impacts of climate change
 - Provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage
 - Protect or improve the quality and character of the landscape or place.
2. The programme is open to all farmers and land managers within AONBs and National Parks, as well as outside if there is a benefit to the protected landscape and its objectives.

Programme management

3. The programme is publicised through the website, via stakeholders, through mailouts and direct contact with potential applicants. Follow up telephone calls and subsequent visits are proving successful. Applicants with an eligible project are invited to complete an application form that is then presented to a Local Assessment Panel. Programme management and reporting to Defra is undertaken by the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer.

Progress Yr 1 (2021-22)

4. The end of Year 1 proved challenging, with a combination of weather and illness delaying one project so that it could not be delivered before the year end. Overall project spend on three projects was £32,104, with an overall outturn of £65,005, resulting in an underspend of £14,995, which cannot be carried over into Year 2 due to Defra rules on carry over.

Progress Yr 2 (2022-23)

5. The programme is progressing in Year 2 with a direct approach to landowners following initial mailouts in Year 1. Currently there are eight approved projects with a total allocation of £65,631, not including any advice or administration costs.

Another eleven projects are under development at the current time. These are made up from a diverse range of landowners including farmers, smallholders, horse graziers, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, National Trust, local Councils and Staffordshire County Council.

Further information

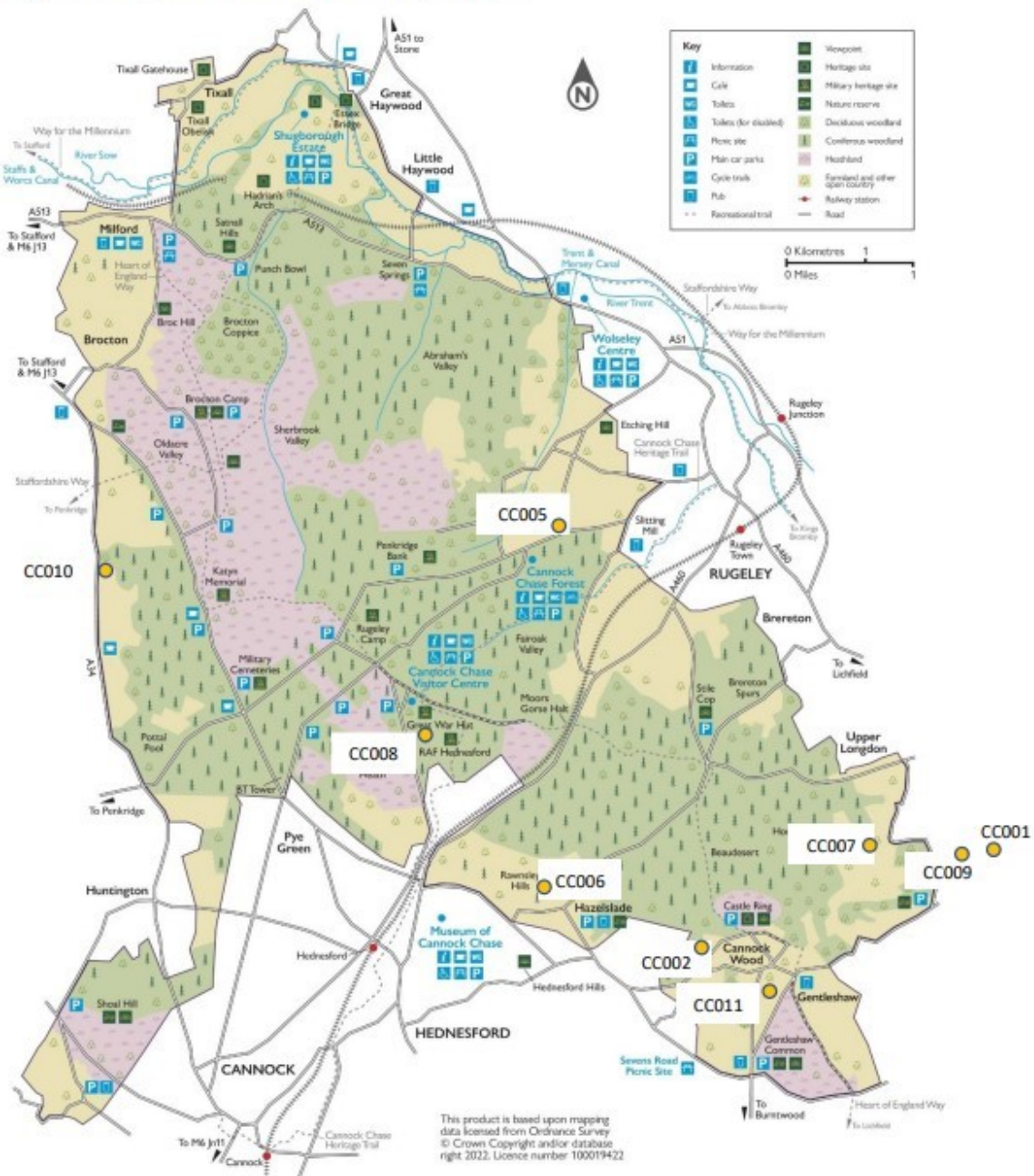
6. Detailed information about the programme, including summaries of funded projects can be found on the Cannock Chase AONB website www.cannock-chase.co.uk/get-involved/farming-in-protected-landscapes/ The locations of approved projects is shown in Appendix 1. Images illustrating some of the funded activities are included in Appendix 2.

Recommendations

7. The Committee notes the report and is invited to ask questions.

Appendix 1

Map showing locations of funded projects



Appendix 2



Spreading heather brush at Beau Desert Golf Club (Project CC006)



Pool construction at Badger Brook Farm near Longdon (Project CC001)

Item 9 Sustainable Development Fund

Item for:	Information
Author:	Richard Harris, AONB Land Management Officer
Financial implications:	The budget allocation for the Sustainable Development Fund for 2022-23 is £10,000 (including £1,000 towards administration costs)
Recommendations:	The Committee notes the report and is invited to ask questions.

Background

1. Cannock Chase AONB has been operating a Sustainable Development Fund since 2006. The purpose of the Fund is to enable local communities, individuals, businesses and other organisations to make a difference in the AONB by promoting and achieving sustainable development.
2. Projects must meet the following criteria:
 - Help to conserve or enhance the AONB's special qualities
 - Encourage sustainable development
 - Have the demonstrable support or involvement of local communities
 - Help deliver the AONB Management Plan
3. Applications are assessed by the Sustainable Development Fund Grants Panel comprising representatives from a range of community, business, and environmental management interests.
4. Projects are judged on how well they meet the essential and desirable criteria and support sustainable development objectives. Projects are also assessed in terms of their benefits and value for money.
5. The scheme is publicised widely to press, partners and to other organisations including voluntary and community groups, and businesses. We operate two rounds of applications, a first for the start of the financial year followed by a second round in July/August if not all money is allocated.

Grant awards 2022-23

6. £2,164 has been awarded to West Midland Bird Club. This is the second phase of the 2022 breeding bird survey of Cannock Chase, which has been undertaken every five years since 1992. The results show changes in key breeding bird populations, such as Birds of Conservation Concern and protected bird species and can be used to inform future management.
7. A second grant of £600 has also been awarded to West Midland Bird Club (an individual surveyor) towards a further phase of an audio survey for long-eared owls.

There are two elements to the survey: i) a research element, using audio techniques to identify location and nesting behaviour of long eared owls and to identify the variations in the calls used by long eared owls; and ii) dissemination of the information to assist in future management and help in future surveys on Cannock Chase.

8. Two other applications were refused. The reasons are as follows. For the application for the replacement of timber bollards at Etching Hill, the Panel felt consideration could have been given to recyclable products, the cash request exceeded the limit on funding, and the volunteer contribution was uncertain. The second application was by Girlguiding Rugeley for a branded gazebo to use as a base for recruitment purposes at events. The Panel felt the project did not link to Cannock Chase or access to it and needed to focus more proactively on the Chase. However, in principle, the Panel would consider new applications if they were amended.
9. Three expressions of interest were also received, and feedback is to be provided. If suitable, these may form applications in the second call for applications to be made imminently.

Recommendations

10. The Committee notes the report and is invited to ask questions.

	Planning inspectorate Application /Appeal			Major application	
	Planning policy			Other consultation (eg. Felling license)	
Authority area	Reference	Site and Description	Response	Response date	LPA decision
Cannock Chase	CH/20/381	Land used as a pony paddock, Rawnsley Road, Cannock Residential - 60 houses	Objection	27.05.21	Approved 20.04.22
South Staffordshire	PINS reference 21/3274332 21/3274333 21/3274334	Planning Appeal against enforcement notice Land at Dovelelys Farm Sandy Lane	Support LPA enforcement action. Urbanising features would result in detrimental impacts. In the context of approved development 19/00701/FUL, would risk concerning cumulative impact.	02.08.21	Hearing date 31.08.22
Stafford	20/33151/FUL	Casa de Lune, 32 Pool Lane, Brocton Garage with living over	Proposal set back from boundary similar to original approved application. Request conditions	11.08.21	Approve 26.05.22 with conditions
Lichfield	21/01069/FUL	Tara House, School Lane, Gentleshaw Amended application Outdoor covered manège			Approve 16.02.22 with condition for lighting
Stafford	21/34563/COU	Brocton Park Farm Change of use of agricultural field to supplying telegraph poles, storage and modular office buildings	Objection. Elevations indicate proposed lighting angled upward impacting on the tranquillity of the rural landscape in the setting of the AONB and contributing to light pollution. Seek sensitive lighting and condition for colour finish of offices	16.12.21 11.01.22 03.02.22	Approve 27.05.22 with conditions
Cannock Chase	CH/21/0383	30 Rugeley Road, Hazelslade Demolition of bungalow 3 new detached houses	Objection. 3 properties would reduce the perceived green space between the centre of Hazelslade and the outlying properties.	04.10.21	Approve 16.02.22 with conditions

South Staffordshire	21/00396/FUL Appeal ref W/21/3281030	Shore Croft West Wing Sandy Lane Hatherton Extension to stable block to include further stables, hay store, grooming, feed, tack and rugs room together with construction of a manège	Support LPA refusal due to detrimental impact on AONB and openness of Green Belt. Proposal would considerably increase the mass of built forms and introduce detracting features, fragmenting the landscape of the designated area.	21.10.21	11.01.22 Appeal Dismissed
Lichfield	21/01620/FULM	Land to west of Stoneyford Lane, Blithbury Solar Farm	Objection Located 3.5km from AONB with Rugeley in the foreground. Seek enhanced mitigation for views of larger structures. Concerns regarding cumulative impact of this proposal and 21/00359/FULM.	28.10.21	Approve 10.05.22 with conditions
Cannock Chase	CH/21/0402	Cannock Chase Forest Centre Temporary use of area for Commonwealth Games 2022 Mountain Biking event	Objection Inadequate consideration of: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Potential impacts from spectators and traffic on event day and training days. Long term effects of increased human pressure as a legacy of the event	26.01.22 08.03.22 05.04.22	Approve 10.05.22 with conditions
South Staffordshire	Planning Appeal PINs reference APP/3430/W/21/328790 2 21/3287902	Land north of the White House, Sandy La, Hatherton Change of use for keeping horses & as residential caravan site for 3 gypsy families, each with 2 caravans and 1 static caravan/mobile home, hardstanding, 3 amenity buildings	Objection The introduction of residential permanent / semi-permanent caravans, buildings and hardstanding would introduce urban features that would detract from the natural beauty and tranquillity, and the openness of the Green Belt	09.02.22	Hearing date 31.08.22
Cannock Chase	CH/22/0044	Brereton Former Closed Colliery change of use of land for an outdoor recreational country	Objection Unable to make a fully informed judgement. Application needs to be supported by HRA, full Ecological Assessment, and clarification	08.03.22 13.04.22	Awaiting decision

		park, the erection of an ancillary visitor centre, visitor car park, and the siting of 100 holiday lodge caravans	regarding potential visibility of the proposed development and viability of mitigation proposal on restored land.		
Cannock Chase	CH/22/0095	Park Gate Barn, Park Gate Road, Cannock Wood Detached garage	Objection. Visual impact	07.04.22	
Cannock Chase	CH/22/0107	Land adj. 6 Stonehouse Road, Etching Hill 4 bed detached property on vacant land	Objection. Dominates street scene, overdevelopment	14.04.22	Refused 16.05.22
South Staffs	22/00050/FUL	Square House, Cannock Rd, Mansty Demolition – 5 new dwellings	Conditional objection. AONB setting - request landscape mitigation	06.04.22	Approve 06.05.22 subject to S106 and conditions
South Staffs	22/00412/FUL	Shore Croft West Wing Sandy Lane Hatherton Extension to stable block to include 3 further stables	Conditional objection. Tree protection plan and clarity on lighting requested	24.05.22	Awaiting decision
Cannock Chase	CH/22/0190	Hill Farm, 82 Hayfield Hill, Cannock Wood Demolition and replacement with 3 new dwellings and conversion of 4 th building to residential	Objection. Proposal would detrimentally affect the character and openness of the landscape and the natural beauty of the AONB. Visually intrusive would not comply with AONB Design Guide and Views and Setting Guide	09.06.22	Awaiting decision
Stafford	22/35623/HOU	Brookside, 23 Main Road Milford two storey side and single storey rear extensions	Objection. Overdevelopment, impact on trees	26.05.22	Awaiting decision
South Staffs	22/00037/PREAPP	West Midlands Interchange	Management Plan welcomes community parks that have potential to relieve pressure on the AONB - Request consultation on design. Support opportunities for heathland creation	01.06.22	

South Staffs	22/00483/FUL	Land at Cocksparrow Lane Use of land for equine for Stable and store	Request conditions for mitigation planting, materials and lighting	29.06.22	
Stafford	Pre-app Request by Harlequin Group for EE –	Mast at Land at Shugborough	Concerns re landscape and visual impact suggestions made for better integration into the landscape and mitigation	30.06.22	
Stafford	Pre-app Request by Harlequin Group for EE –	Mast at Meadow Lane, Little Haywood	Concerns re landscape and visual impact suggestions made for better integration into the landscape and mitigation	30.06.22	

Recommendations

4. The Joint Committee notes progress made on planning matters since the last meeting and is invited to ask questions.

7. The AONB Management Plan review process is lengthy, complex and time-consuming, and will require external support to be delivered.

The changing national situation

8. The Government response to the Landscapes Review (March 2022) identified several significant potential changes to protected landscapes. Some of these will require amendments to the statutory purposes and duties of AONBs.
9. As part of the response the Government has set out its preferred approach of the creation of a National Landscape Strategy (NLS), which will include the expected contributions of protected landscapes towards nature recovery, climate mitigation and adaptation, access and engagement. AONB management plans will be expected to align to the NLS, along with existing national policies such as the 25-year Environment Plan and net zero. There will be a strengthened role for Natural England to review the revised management plans ensuring they make ambitious contributions to national targets.
10. Government has requested that Natural England create new Management Plan Guidance to incorporate these changes and to produce an outcomes framework allowing annual reporting to track progress. The new guidance will also build the foundations allowing management plans to facilitate delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies without duplication.
11. The National Landscape Strategy is expected to be produced in spring 2023. There is no indication when the new AONB Management Plan Guidance will be available: however, due to the processes and other activities required it is likely to be mid to late 2023.
12. With the potential for new strengthened purposes and duties and including linkages to duties placed on local authorities, such as delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies, it is likely that the reviewed AONB management plan will require greater scrutiny and engagement from local authorities. This may require a longer timeline.

Policy developments

13. We are also in the midst of wider significant policy developments both nationally and locally, the outcomes of which may significantly influence a Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan. For example:
 - The role of protected areas in delivering the UK government's policy to protect 30% of all four nations' land and seas for nature by 2030 ('30x30').
 - Our current work on better understanding the local requirements for climate change mitigation and their impacts.
 - Our current work to make Cannock Chase more relevant, inclusive and diverse
 - The development and publication of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
 - Further development and roll-out of new funding mechanisms for environmental management and nature recovery including Environmental Land Management, Biodiversity Net Gain and payment for ecosystem services.

Consequences of a delay

14. Conversations with the National Association for AONBs indicate that most AONBs see merit in delaying their management plan review cycles by a year to allow for greater certainty over matters like the proposed reforms arising from the Government's response to the Landscapes Review, the proposed National Landscape Strategy and the publication of refreshed Management Plan Guidance by Natural England.
15. Defra supports this delay and is currently looking at the feasibility and legal implications of a voluntary option to account for this. This includes a view on how the plan cycle can be delayed in a new policy context in a way which is lawful, and which does not impact on the status of the policies in any current management plan. The final decision on this delay will be subject to legal and ministerial advice. Defra plans to issue official communications confirming this decision within the coming weeks. The intention is that there won't be any formal direction from Government one way or another, merely that it provides for local determination of what works best locally.

Conclusions

16. Delaying the review of the AONB management plan by 12 months makes sense to ensure that the new plan is fit for purpose and compliant with new reforms, policy drivers and guidance.
17. A delay will require a decision by the appropriate authorities to continue with the existing plan without amendment. Defra guidance is awaited for the process that needs to be followed to bring this about.

Recommendation

18. The Committee agrees, in principle, to a 12-month delay in the review of the Cannock Chase AONB management plan, subject to Defra guidance on due process.

Appendix 1: Indicative timeline for AONB management plan review (based on current review cycle)

Activity	2022		2023				2024
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Start Up							
Write to LAs / NE – notification of review	●						
Scoping paper to OWG	●						
Scoping report to JC	●						
Initiation							
Create logs and registers for review							
Draft ToR for Management Plan Review Group							
Assess lessons learnt							
MPRG meetings		●	●	●	●	●	●
Consideration of SPD status							
Stage 1 consultation							
Initial public consultation							
Initial stakeholder consultation							
Stage 2 draft development							
Consider consultation responses							
Draft management plan							
Input from staff / MPRG							
Stage 3 consultation on draft							
Interested public consultation							
Statutory agencies consultation							
Input responses into draft							
Stage 4 Screening							
Compliance with SEA / HR / ED							
Stage 5 Approval and adoption							
OWG approval						●	
JC approval						●	
Statutory agencies adoption							
LAs adoption							
Closing							
Design management plan document							
Publish new management plan							

Appendix 2: AONB management plans – compliance checks

What	Why	When	Statutory Consultees
Equality Duty (Equality Impact Assessment)	<i>Sc 149 of Equalities Act 2010.</i> Specific duty on LA (including AONBs) to have consideration of equality issues in their decision making	Consider when policies are formulated	Local Authorities
Statement of Community Involvement	<i>Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.</i> Used for local development documents, relevant if management plan is to be adopted as material consideration or supplementary Planning Documents.	First process before main management plan review occurs	Local Authorities
Strategic Environmental Assessment	<i>SEA Directive 2001/42/EC. SEA Regulations 2004.</i> Scope the revised management plan to see if significant changes have been made. If yes, carry out further assessment	After final draft	Natural England, Environment Agency, Historic England
Appropriate Assessment (Habitats Regulation Assessment)	<i>Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017.</i> Relevant for Cannock Chase SAC and any other European sites.	After final draft	Natural England