



**Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Business Plan 2023-25**

DRAFT V3

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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. The lifetime of the current Management Plan has been extended by 12 months until 31 March 2025 in order to allow new national guidance and Protected Landscape reforms to be published and announced.
- 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 (extended) AONB Management Plan over the two year period 2023-25.

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 (OWG) | 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 |

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| | by coordinating activity with partners, leading project development and delivery as appropriate. |
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The AONB Team

2.2 The AONB Team currently has 4 core posts, comprising a total Full Time Equivalent of 3.1 FTE. A further 1 FTE member of staff is engaged to deliver the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (2021-25). The current staffing structure is:

| | |
|---|---------|
| • AONB Development Officer | 1 FTE |
| • AONB Land Management Officer | 1 FTE |
| • AONB Landscape Planning Officer | 0.6 FTE |
| • AONB Communications Officer | 0.5 FTE |
| • Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer | 1 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 activities’ (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 Team, 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.

2.6 A new Targets and Outcomes Framework for Protected Landscapes is currently in development and likely to be introduced during 2023-24. Natural England will monitor and evaluate progress against the key indicators and outcomes.

3. Where we are trying to get to

Our vision

- 3.1 The Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2019 – 2024 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:



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

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

Communication

- Raising profile - telling others what we do and why we do it
- Inspiring people to look after Cannock Chase through greater awareness and understanding

Delivery

- 3.4 The delivery of our strategic objectives is set out in our work programme (Annex 2).
- 3.5 The programme includes a number of AONB Projects led by the AONB Team which will require core funding and/or 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 At the time of its preparation in 2018/19, 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 Whilst we will continue to concentrate our attention to these challenges, there are a number of additional areas to which we also need to respond and devote our energies:
- Making Cannock Chase more inclusive, diverse and relevant
 - Changing people’s perceptions of Cannock Chase and encouraging positive behaviours
 - Supporting the recovery of nature, and the response of the AONB family through the Colchester Declaration 2019, the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Staffordshire and the commitments of Protected Landscapes to contribute to the Government’s target of 30 by 30

- Delivering and meeting expectations for Defra’s externally funded programmes – Farming in Protected Landscapes and Access for All
- Protecting and celebrating the Chase’s rich cultural and historic environment
- Implementing Protected Landscape reforms emerging from the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes, and the Government’s response. These include: refreshed guidance for AONB Management Plans; Targets and Outcomes Framework; the new Protected Landscapes Partnership; National Landscapes name and re-brand.

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

Corporate risk

- 4.3 The AONB Team 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 are available to the public on the Cannock Chase AONB website. Our main achievements are 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, the sustainable development fund and AONB projects. 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 Our current 3-year funding settlement from Defra runs from 2022 – 25. This confirmed an additional £22,083.39 in 2022/23 (on top of the baseline 2021/22 budget). The same uplift

has been confirmed for 2023/24 and is indicative for 2024/25. The budget for 2023/24 is included in Annex 5.

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.

Externally funded programmes

- 5.6 In addition to core funding for AONB activities, Defra has allocated additional funding for AONBs for two programmes – Farming in Protected Landscapes (2021-25), and Access for All (2023-25). These are summarised in Annex 6 and 7 respectively.

Project development

- 5.7 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 developmental 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 Team, 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 Team, 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

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

Actions led by the AONB Team 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, CO – Communications Officer, FiPL – Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer).

***is used to indicate those actions requiring core funding**, and highlighted in Annex 3.*

| Landscape Character and Planning | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain quality and distinctiveness • Enhance the landscape setting | | | | | | | |
| Priorities | Action | Key milestones | AONB policy / action Nos. | T&F Group Lead | AONB Team Lead | By when (2023-24) | By when (2024-25) |
| Encourage landscape-led development | Monitor the effectiveness of our planning protocol with local planning authorities | Report to Joint Committee | LCP1 | LP | LPO | Annually | Annually |
| | Input landscape advice to planning policy and development management | Responses to consultations | LCP1 | LP | LPO | As required | As required |
| | Provide landscape design input to HS2 enabling works and HS2 environmental enhancement works | Responses to consultations | LCP1 | LP | LPO | As required | 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 to relevant partners and contractors | LCP2, B1 | LP | LPO | Q2 | |

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|--|--|--|-----------------|----------------|------|---------------------------|---|
| Improve the quality and experience of the night skies | **Promote the value of dark skies with local communities** | Support family sessions with CPRE and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to coincide with Star Count 2024 and 2025 | LCP1, LCP9, A1 | LP | LPO | Q4 | Q4 |
| | Prepare a Good Lighting Guide | Guide published | LCP1, LCP9, A1 | LP | LPO | Q2 | |
| | Repeat Sky Quality Survey to feed into State of the AONB Report 2023/24 | Survey conducted | LCP1, LCP9, A1 | LP | LPO | Q4 | |
| Protect and enhance views within and from the AONB | Work with statutory undertakers to explore opportunities for undergrounding powerlines in the AONB | Further opportunities shared with Western Power, and awaiting response | LCP8 | LP | LPO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Encourage and support agricultural land management that contributes to the special qualities of the AONB | Continue to foster links with the farmer and land manager network and encourage uptake of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (2021-25) | Funding applications submitted FiPL outcomes delivered Budget allocated | LCP4, LCP5, A12 | LP LM | FiPL | Ongoing | Ongoing. FiPL programme closes 31 March 2025 |
| Monitor the condition of the landscape | Support Fixed Point Photography volunteers to monitor 56 key views twice a year (+ 3 new viewpoints for HS2), and upload the results onto the AONB website | Photos taken and uploaded | LCP1-10 | LP | LPO | Biannually (Feb and Sept) | Biannually (Feb and Sept) |
| | Hold a review with volunteers annually | Review meeting held | LCP1-10 | LP | LPO | Q4 | Q4 |
| | **Work with partners to prepare landscape visualisations of options for future landscape change for review of AONB Management Plan** | Visualisations prepared. New monitoring locations from National Trust | LCP1-10 | LP, LM, HE, VM | LPO | | Q2 |

| | | woodpasture restoration project | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Wildlife and Nature | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve conditions for nature • Enlarge and connect habitats | | | | | | | |
| Priorities | Action | Key milestones | AONB policy / action Nos. | T&F Group Lead | AONB Team Lead | By when (2023-24) | By when (2024-25) |
| Strategy for Nature Recovery | Prepare Nature Recovery Plan, linking in with the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy and 30by30 framework. | Plan agreed | WN9, A13 | LM | LMO | | Q4 |
| Priority habitat recovery | Work with Natural England, partners and landowners to deliver Purple Horizons (Midlands Heathland Heartland Initiative) | Delivery programmes underway | WN8, WN9, B7, A13 | LM (Natural England) | LMO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| | Monitor delivery of habitat and access improvements on Gentleshaw Common SSSI through the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative, and report to National Grid | Receipt of monitoring reports | WN3, A2 | LM (SWT) | LMO | Ongoing | Concluding in 2024-25 |
| | 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 | Ongoing |
| | Develop and implement wetland restoration programme including Cannock Chase springs audit, peatland inventory, Sher Brook | Programme developed and funded. | WN2, WN4, A2 | LM (Natural England) | LMO | 2022-23, Q4 | |

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| | restoration programme, Sher Brook hydrological monitoring | | | | | | | |
| | Develop and implement grassland inventory | Preparation of inventory identifying all remaining unimproved grasslands | WN2, A2 | LM | LMO | | Q4 | |
| Priority species recovery | Work with partners and landowners to deliver recommended conservation improvements arising from past surveys and audits for: Crayfish Bats Invertebrate groups Nightjars Long-eared owls | All landowners advised, and conservation measures implemented. Funding applications submitted to FiPL | WN2, A2 | LM | LMO | Ongoing | Ongoing | |
| | Improve understanding of status of Adder population | Preparation and testing of landscape model developed by Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) | WN2, A2 | LM | LMO | Q3 | | |
| | Develop and implement key invertebrate surveys | Natural England Field Unit survey | WN2, A2 | LM | LMO | Q2 | | |
| | Development and implement early successional species survey | Publication of survey findings | WN2, A2 | LM | LMO | 2022-23, Q4 | | |
| | <i>**Work with Woodland Trust and volunteers to improve our knowledge and understanding of veteran trees**</i> | Veteran tree records | WN2, A2 | LM, LP, HE | LMO, LPO | Q3 (training day) | Q3 (training day) | |
| | Balance the needs of a healthy deer population, with habitats, property owners and the public | Work with landowners to prepare a deer management strategy and operational action plans | Publication of deer management strategy and operational action plans | WN6, B5 | LM | LMO | Q4 (strategy) | Q4 (operational action plans) |
| | | <i>**Biennial deer census**</i> | Spring and Autumn censuses | WN6, B5 | LM | LMO | | Q2 and Q4 |

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| Control invasive species | Prepare an audit of invasive weeds, pests and diseases | Audit completed | WN5, B6 | LM | LMO | Q4 | |
| | Share information with landowners to inform land management decisions and support development of collaborative approaches | Information shared. Funding applications submitted to FiPL Applications for species control via FiPL | WN5, B6 | LM | LMO | 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. Funding applications submitted to FiPL | WN7, B19 | LM | LMO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Historic Environment and Culture | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve the Chase's historic environment • Connect communities with the Chase's history and culture | | | | | | | |
| Priorities | Action | Key milestones | AONB policy / action Nos. | T&F Group Lead | AONB Team Lead | By when (2023-24) | By when (2024-25) |
| Strategy for heritage protection and enhancement | Complete and publish Heritage Strategy | Strategy published | HC2, B17 | HE | DO | Q4 | |
| Improve the condition of heritage assets | <i>**Work with landowners and Historic England to develop and implement conservation and enhancement measures arising from the Heritage Strategy**</i> | All landowners advised, and conservation measures implemented Funding applications submitted to FiPL | HC2, B17 | HE | LMO | | Q4 |

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| | **Discuss with landowners reinstatement of OS trig points** | Trig points reinstated | HC2, B17 | HE | LMO | Q4 | 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 Heritage Strategy** | Funding secured and measures implemented Funding applications submitted to FiPL | HC3, B9 | HE | LMO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Monitor the condition of the historic environment | Work with Historic England to support, co-ordinate volunteer activity to locate and assess the condition of the 7 Scheduled Monuments in the AONB | Number of monuments inspected Recommended management actions communicated to landowners | HC1, B16 | HE | LMO | | Q4 |
| | 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 | Ongoing |
| Experience and enjoyment | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treading lightly in the Chase • A greener experience | | | | | | | |
| Priorities | Action | Key milestones | AONB policy / action Nos. | T&F Group Lead | AONB Team Lead | By when (2023-24) | By when (2024-25) |
| Connect people with the landscape, heritage and | **Work with Friends of Cannock Chase and Ramblers to organise and run a Cannock Chase Walk and Ride Festival** | Festival held | EE3, EE5 | VM | DO | | Q3 |

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| wildlife of Cannock Chase | **Work with the Ramblers and PROW to publish Walking Cannock Chase trails** | Leaflets published | EE4, EE5 | VM | DO | Q3 | |
| | **Work with the British Horse Society and SAC Partnership to review and refresh AONB promoted horse riding routes (X2)** | Leaflets re-published | EE4, EE5 | VM | DO | Q4 | |
| | **Develop and distribute a video celebrating Cannock Chase** | Video produced and used in key locations | EE4, EE5 | VM | DO | | Q2 |
| Encourage visitors to Cannock Chase to travel more sustainably | **Utilising the Cannock Chase place brand 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 | | Q4 |
| 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 | As required |
| | **Review the AONB Interpretation Strategy (2016-2021)** | Strategy reviewed and published | EE4, A8 | VM | CO, DO | | Q4 |
| | **Review the AONB Visitor Management Strategy (2015)** | Strategy reviewed and published | EE4, A8 | VM | CO, DO | | Q4 |
| Connect people to nature and | Support NAAONB bid to the Arts Council | Bid successful | EE5 | VM | DO | Q4 | |

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| landscape through the arts | <i>**Develop arts projects with local art groups and artists**</i> | Projects delivered | EE5 | VM | DO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Communities and Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 (2023-24) | By when (2024-25) |
| Strengthen our volunteer base | Recruit new volunteers | New volunteers recruited | CB3, A6 | AONB Team | CO, LMO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| | Provide ongoing support to volunteers engaged with Great War Hut, Fixed Point Photography, and Milford Hut | Training and social sessions. | CB3, A6 | AONB Team | LMO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| | Keep risk assessments and health and safety requirements up to date | Risk assessments reviewed | CB3, A6 | AONB Team | LMO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Promote volunteering opportunities across the Chase | Support volunteering opportunities with partners | Volunteers signposted to Chase Up! and partner organisations | CB3, A6 | AONB Team | CO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Inspire young people to appreciate and look after Cannock Chase | <i>**Launch and promote Future Guardians programme with Staffordshire Libraries, Duke of Edinburgh, Staffordshire Scouts and Girlguiding Staffordshire**</i> | Programme launched Resource materials made available in libraries, on AONB and users' websites | CB1, B20 | AONB Team | CO, DO | Q1 | |
| Raise awareness and understanding of Cannock Chase and the AONB | Complete and promote Cannock Chase e-learning training course | Number of participants completing the course | CB1, CB2, B11 | VM | CO | Q4 | Ongoing |
| Build more sustainable and | Invite businesses on and in close proximity to Cannock Chase to | Businesses registered | CB4 | AONB Team | CO | Ongoing | Ongoing |

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| empowering relationships with local businesses by improving their awareness of Cannock Chase and embedding the AONB in their products, services and ethos. | register to use the sense of place toolkit | | | | | | |
| Reach out and connect to all parts of society, especially those who currently fail to benefit from Cannock Chase. | Appoint Diversity and Inclusion Champion | Champion appointed | CB2 | AONB Team | DO | Q4 | |
| | Prepare Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan | Action Plan published | CB2 | AONB Team | DO | Q4 | |
| | Deliver Access for All programme | Projects funded | CB2 | AONB Team | DO | | Q4 |
| | 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 Team | LMO, CO | Annual call for EOI | Annual call for EOI |
| Governance | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 (2023-24) | By when (2024-25) |
| Support effective governance and management of | Organise and support meetings of the Joint Committee | 3 meetings held each year (March, July (AGM) and December) | All | AONB Team | DO | March, July, Dec | March, July, Dec |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|
| the AONB Partnership | Organise and support meetings of the Officers Working Group | 3 meetings held each year (March, July and December) | All | AONB Team | DO | March, July, Dec | March, July, Dec |
| | Organise and support meetings of Task and Finish Groups, currently: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape & Planning Land Management Historic Environment Visitor Management | Meetings held as and when required | All | AONB Team | AONB Team | As required | As required |
| | Report progress on the Business Plan to the Joint Committee | Progress reported annually (Q4) against the Business Plan | All | AONB Team | DO | Q4 annually | Q4 annually |
| | Submit regular claims to Defra for core grant | Interim claim (75%) submitted September Final claim (25%) submitted March | All | AONB Team | DO | Q2 and Q4 annually | Q2 and Q4 annually |
| | Maintain and update risk register | Register updated | All | AONB Team | DO | Annually | Annually |
| | Broaden representation on our governance bodies | Gaps are filled | All | AONB Team | DO | Q4 | |
| 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 Team | AONB Team | As required | As required |
| | Report to the NAAONB performance statistics for Cannock Chase AONB against key metrics | Annual performance statistics returned by August each year | All | AONB Team | DO | August annually | August annually |
| Raise resources to support delivery of AONB activities | <i>**Establish the Cannock Chase Charitable Fund with Staffordshire Community Foundation**</i> | Fund established and launched | CB1, A4 | AONB Team | DO | Q4 | |
| Building resilience and adapting to a changing climate | Appoint climate change champion | Champion appointed | All | AONB Team | DO | Q4 | |

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|--|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| | Prepare climate change action plan | Action plan published | All | AONB Team | DO | Q4 | |
| 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 Team | DO | As required | As required |
| Review the AONB Management Plan | Prepare new State of the AONB report 2023 | Review completed and published | All | AONB Team | DO | Q4 | |
| | <i>**Prepare new AONB Management Plan 2025-30**</i> | Management Plan published | All | AONB Team | DO | | Q2-Q4 |
| Communication | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising profile – telling others what we do and why we do it Inspiring people to look after Cannock Chase through greater awareness and understanding | | | | | | | |
| Priorities | Action | Key milestones | AONB policy / action Nos. | T&F Group Lead | AONB Team Lead | By when | |
| 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 Team | CO, DO | Q4 | Q4 |
| | Produce an annual report on AONB activity, showcasing the positive outcomes from AONB Partnership work | Annual report published | All | AONB Team | CO | Q2 annually | Q2 annually |
| | Prepare new Communications strategy 2025- 2030 | Communications Strategy published | CB1, CB2 | VM | CO | | Q4 |
| 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 | Ongoing |
| | Encourage visitor centres/hubs/attractions to use the Cannock Chase place brand and | Place brand promoted at all sites | CB1, CB2 | VM | DO | Ongoing from 2021-22 | Ongoing |

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|--|--|---|----------|-----------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| | communicate consistent messaging about the special qualities of the nationally important landscape | | | | | | |
| | Provide training for front of house staff at visitor centres/hubs | Training sessions held | CB1, CB2 | VM | DO | Q4 | |
| | Develop promotional merchandise to disseminate the place brand | Merchandise produced and sold in retail outlets | CB1, CB2 | VM | DO | Q4 | |
| Sustain regular communication channels to all partners within the AONB Partnership and with our key stakeholders | Keep stakeholders updated with news, events and activities through our newsletter | Minimum 4 newsletters published each year | CB2 | AONB Team | CO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| | Keep partners updated through partnership bulletin | Minimum 4 partnership bulletins published each year | CB2 | AONB Team | CO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Engage with the online community | Develop social media presence to reinforce essential messages | Targeted communications to the right audiences | CB2 | AONB Team | CO | From Q4 | Ongoing |
| | Using our Cannock Chase network, we will encourage our partners to share our social media posts on their pages to increase its reach. We will share their news and content as well. | Social media posts shared | CB2 | AONB Team | DO, LPO, LMO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Raise awareness of Cannock Chase and the benefits it provides through co-ordinated public awareness campaigns engaging with all target audiences | 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 | Campaigns delivered | CB2 | VM | CO | Annually | Annually |
| | Support Forestry England and other landowners to promote the Ride with Respect campaign | Campaign launched | CB2 | VM | CO | As required | As required |
| Maintain the AONB website as | Keep the AONB website up to date, and aim to regularly post news items. | Minimum of one news item posted every two weeks | CB2 | AONB Team | CO | Ongoing | Ongoing |

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| the focus for information about the AONB and the work of the AONB Partnership | | | | | | | |
| | Encourage our partners to share news items on their websites to increase their reach | News items shared | CB2 | VM | CO | Ongoing | 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 | Media stories released | CB2 | VM | CO | Ongoing | 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 | CO | Ongoing | 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 outcomes | CB2 | AONB Team | CO, DO | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| | Incorporate the National Landscapes name and re-brand into our work | Number of outcomes | CB2 | AONB Team | | From Q3 | Ongoing |

Annex 3. AONB projects (core funded)

| Project | Theme | Estimated cost | |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
| Dark Skies awareness sessions | Landscape Character and Planning | £1,000 | £1,000 |
| Landscape visualisations of options for future landscape change (6 visualisations) | Landscape Character and Planning | - | £6,000 |
| Veteran tree volunteer training | Wildlife and Nature | £250 | £250 |
| Spring and Autumn deer census | Wildlife and Nature | - | £6,000 |
| Activities from the Heritage Strategy | Historic Environment and Culture | - | Costs not yet known |
| Reinstatement of surviving trig points | Historic Environment and Culture | £3,000 | £3,000 |
| Walk and Ride Festival | Experience and Enjoyment | - | £5,000 |
| Walking Cannock Chase leaflets X6 | Experience and Enjoyment | £2,500 | |
| Horse riding leaflets X2 | Experience and Enjoyment | £1,500 | |
| AONB video | Experience and Enjoyment | - | £5,000 |
| Welcome and interpretation totems and posters at train stations | Experience and Enjoyment | - | £20,000 |
| Review the AONB Interpretation Strategy | Experience and Enjoyment | - | £7,500 |
| Review the Visitor Management Strategy | Experience and Enjoyment | - | £7,500 |
| Local arts project | Experience and Enjoyment | Costs not yet known | Costs not yet known |
| Future Guardians of Cannock Chase (launch and challenge badges) | Communities and Business | £2,100 | - |
| Cannock Chase Fund (legal oversight) | Governance | £1,500 | |
| New AONB Management Plan 2025-30 | Governance | | £15,000 |
| Implementation of National Landscapes re-brand | Governance | Costs not yet known | Costs not yet known |

Annex 4. Risk register

| Topic | Key Risks | Potential Impact | Mitigation | Remaining Risk |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|----------------|
| 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; temporary cover sought during the recruitment process to ensure continuity of service 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 financial implications e.g. redundancy costs | Defra funding confirmed for 2023/24; partnership agreement in place for local authority contributions. | Medium |
| | Funding shortfall in budget | Reduction in core expenditure, including staffing to meet the shortfall would impact on delivery of the AONB programme | Utilise AONB Reserves to meet funding shortfall (but this is only a temporary measure); request increase in local authority contributions | High |
| | Failure to secure wider funding for delivery | Impact on delivery of AONB programme | Establishment of Cannock Chase Charitable Fund will over time provide access to broader funding base | Medium |
| | Financial mismanagement | Loss of funds; failure to comply with grant requirements; penalties | Systems, procedures and training in place via host authority | Low |
| External funding programmes | Failure to find projects | Inability to fully spend funding allocations and having to return unspent monies to | Programmes widely promoted | Medium |

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|---------------------------------|--|--|---|--------|
| | | Defra; reputational risk for the AONB | | |
| | Introduction of new programmes places strains on existing capacity | Impact on delivery of the AONB programme; increased stresses on staff | Secure additional capacity through the funding programme, if allowed; re-jig the AONB Business Plan to accommodate new programmes; keep Joint Committee informed to manage expectations | Medium |
| Partnership | Loss of partner support | Impact on delivery of programme as work hinges on positive relations and input from others | Involve partners in programme planning and delivery, governance meetings, and internal and external communications to create sense of 'ownership'; increase partners' accountability | Medium |
| 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 home. different offices and touch-down centres; systems backed up | Low |
| 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 |
| AONB Volunteers | Inability to recruit/retain volunteers | Impact on the delivery of the AONB programme | Volunteer roles widely promoted; AONB activities communication to wider audience | Medium |
| | Health and safety incidents for Great War Hut, Milford Hut and Fixed Point Photography volunteers and the public | Safety of volunteers and members of the public; potential legal implications | Separate risk assessments in place for Great War Hut, Milford Hut and Fixed Point Photography volunteers, and regularly reviewed | Low |

| | | | | |
|------------|---|---|---|-----|
| Reputation | Reputation of the AONB called into question | Loss of confidence and trust in the AONB; value of local authority funding called into question | Policy of openness, transparency and accountability; AONB activities and budget monitored; regular reports to Defra and Joint Committee; regular communication via Annual Review, Annual Conference, newsletter and social media. | Low |
|------------|---|---|---|-----|

Annex 5. Budget prediction for 2023-24

The net revenue budget for 2023/24, as approved by the AONB Joint Committee at its meeting on 8th December 2022, is set out below. This assumed an inflationary uplift on pay of 4% and pension fund contributions of 1% and 0% on all other expenditure budgets.

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Cannock Chase AONB Core & Project Costs

Draft Cannock Chase AONB Budget 2023-24

| | Total Budget £ | Defra Grant £ |
|--|-------------------|------------------|
| AONB Core Budget | | |
| Staff Salaries and Associated costs | 184,540 | 138,405 |
| Office Equipment | 500 | 375 |
| Annual Audit | 0 | 0 |
| Volunteers | 500 | 375 |
| National Liaison | 3,160 | 2,370 |
| Print & Publicity | 2,000 | 1,500 |
| Partnership Running Costs | 9,000 | 6,750 |
| AONB Website | 0 | 0 |
| Annual Conference | 0 | 0 |
| Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc) | 500 | 375 |
| Core Budget Subtotal | 200,200 | 150,150 |
| Sustainable Development Fund | 6,600 | 6,600 |
| AONB Projects | 15,150 | 15,150 |
| Total Budget | 221,950 | 171,900 |

| | Total | % of Expenditure |
|---|-----------------|------------------|
| Funded By: | | |
| DEFRA Grant | | |
| Core | -150,150 | 75.00% |
| Sustainable Development Fund | -6,600 | 100.00% |
| AONB Projects | -15,150 | 100.00% |
| DEFRA Grant Subtotal | -171,900 | |
| Local Authority Contributions | | |
| Cannock Chase Council | -10,010 | 5.00% |
| Stafford Borough Council | -10,010 | 5.00% |
| Lichfield District Council | -2,503 | 1.25% |
| South Staffordshire Council | -2,503 | 1.25% |
| Staffordshire County Council | -25,025 | 12.50% |
| Local Authority Contributions Subtotal | -50,050 | 25.00% |
| Total Income | -221,950 | 100.00% |

Annex 6. Farming in Protected Landscapes - programme summary

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme 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.

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.

The programme opened in July 2021, and has been extended for a 4th year until 31 March 2025.

The programme is administered and delivered locally through the AONB team. Applicants with an eligible project are invited to complete an application form that is then presented to a Local Assessment Panel for determination. Programme management and reporting to Defra is undertaken by the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer.

Annex 7. Access for All - programme summary

Access for All is a three year funding programme (2022-25) which will improve access to green and blue spaces across the country. It is part of Defra's commitment to make targeted access improvements in our protected landscapes, national trails, forests and the wider countryside to help bring the benefits of spending time in nature to everyone. There is no funding available in the second year of the 3-year programme.

Funding will pay for infrastructure improvements to make protected landscapes more accessible for people of all ages, abilities and needs such as: new gates; walking routes; inclusive cycles, E-trikes, bikes or wheelchairs; volunteer equipment and accessible visitor facilities. The additional funding is for capital spend only, and can include both physical and digital infrastructure improvements.

The Access for All programme was developed in response to the Landscapes Review which called on the government to open up our national landscapes to a more diverse audience. The programme also delivers on commitments in the 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environmental Improvement Plan to encourage more people to spend time in nature to benefit their health and wellbeing.

The programme was publicly announced in Defra's Environmental Improvement Plan, published in February 2023

The programme is administered and delivered locally through the AONB team. There is no call for applications: rather the Team identifies and procures projects that will support activities that help to deliver the Experience and Enjoyment Theme of our AONB Management Plan 2019-24 as well our aspirations to make Cannock Chase more relevant, inclusive and diverse.