



Cannock Chase National Landscape

**Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership
Meeting of the Joint Committee
18th March 2024 at 14.30 HRS
To be held at the Main Conference Room, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Wolseley
Centre, ST17 0WT**

Members of the public are welcome to attend in person.

No.	Item	Item for	Page
1	Welcome and introductions		
2	Apologies for absence		
3	Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2023	APPROVAL	3
4	Public questions		9
5	Finance report <i>(a) To note progress on the current net revenue budget for 2023-24 and the current forecast position</i> <i>(b) To note progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme</i> <i>(c) To note spend for the Access for All Fund</i> Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee	(a) INFORMATION (b) INFORMATION (c) INFORMATION	10
6	Partner presentation - Cemex <i>To inform members about the operation and restoration of land at Rugeley Quarry</i> Verbal presentation by Matthew Shorland, Development Manager, Cemex	INFORMATION	16
7	AONB Management Plan Review 2025-30 <i>(a) To seek authorisation to undertake the review of the AONB Management Plan 2025-30</i> <i>(b) To update Members about strengthened duties towards AONBs and the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework</i> Report of the Team Leader	(a) DECISION (b) INFORMATION	17
8	AONB Business Plan 2023-25, end-year one review <i>To report to members performance against year one of Business Plan activities (2023-24)</i>	INFORMATION	23

	<i>and indicative priority areas for year two (2024-25)</i> Report of the Team Leader		
9	Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme <i>To update members about outputs of year 3 of the programme, and plans for year 4.</i> Report of the FiPL Officers	INFORMATION	26
10	National Landscape re-brand <i>To update members about progress to implement the National Landscapes re-brand</i> Verbal report of the Communications Officer	INFORMATION	31
11	Conferences <i>To update members about arrangements for the Cannock Chase National Landscape Annual Conference and National Landscapes Annual Conference</i> Verbal report of the Communications Officer	INFORMATION	32
12	Date, time and venue of next meeting <i>July 2024 (meeting and AGM) TBC</i>		33

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Councillor Wilson opened proceedings and welcomed everyone to the meeting of the National Landscape Partnership Joint Committee.

2. Apologies for absence

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Andrea Muckley (Cannock Chase Council), Councillor Kath Perry (South Staffordshire Council), Kinga Niedzinska (Cannock Chase SAC Partnership), Wendy Bannerman (British Horse Society), Bill Waller (Stafford Borough Council), Lauren Lymer (Lichfield District Council, Mary Cope (Beaudesert Park Farm), Kezia Taylorson (Historic England), Nick Carter (Historic England), Mark Kelly (Cemex), Paddy Harrop (Forestry England).

- 2.2 VW noted that a number of organisations on the Joint Committee hadn't attended for a number of meetings, and asked for them to be contacted and encouraged to attend.

3. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2022

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th July 2022 were submitted.

3.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the previous meeting are approved.

4. Public Questions

- 4.1 No questions were received.

5. Finance Report – Revenue Budget 2023/24

- 5.1 Nikki Mihajlovic (NM) advised:

- The current forecast outturn position when compared to budget is a breakeven position. This after transferring £13,070 from the AONB reserve to fund the core funding shortfall (£2,680 less than originally budgeted). There has also been a further transfer from the reserve of £5,000 to fund hosting and support for the AONB website.
- The Farming in Protected Landscape Programme budget is predicting a breakeven position. In the event of any underspend, this will have to be returned to Defra.
- The balance on the AONB Reserve at the end of 2023/24 will be £54,228 (from £70,448) after accounting for proposed transfers to balance the core budget.
- The revenue budget for 2024/25 is anticipating a shortfall of £13,240. Two options are presented for Members' views. Option 1 proposes to transfer £13,240 from the AONB Reserve to achieve a balanced budget. This would reduce the balance on the Reserve from its current anticipated level at the end of 2023/24 of £54,228 to £40,988. Option 2 proposes reducing the Sustainable Development Fund budget by £5,000 and the AONB projects by £8,240, and the combined amount of £13,240

would then be re-allocated to the core funding budget to achieve a balanced budget.

- 5.2 TP noted that the AONB website had recently been hacked and asked who hosts it. IM and SH explained that the National Landscape is now in a new 3 year arrangement with Staffordshire County Council for the price of 2 years. The website is hosted via a third party provider, and recompense for the security breach is unlikely. SCC webteam has rebuilt the site in their own time and at their own cost.
- 5.3 RB expressed concern with the proposed reduction in the Sustainable Development Fund under Option 2. IM explained that it was hoped the proposed establishment of the Cannock Chase Community Fund would generate enough income from voluntary giving to replace the SDF in the medium term. Option 2 also proposes a reduction in AONB projects, but as explained by IM, the impact would be mitigated so some extent by the increase in Defra funding for project work, such as, Access for All and FiPL.
- 5.4 Concerns were expressed by several advisers about the way in which the Community Fund will operate; how the fund will be ring-fenced within the Community Foundation, and the criteria used for grant-giving. IM pointed out that the Joint Committee had already approved the principle of establishing the Fund and that SCC Legal Team was providing legal oversight. He clarified that both the Community Foundation for Staffordshire and the National Landscapes Team would take a small management fee for operating the Fund.
- 5.5 TP proposed a third option meet the budget shortfall - to request that local authorities increase their contributions. This proposal was not seconded.
- 5.6 Members voted to support Option 1 - to meet the budget shortfall from the AONB reserve. FB commented that the Reserves cannot continue to be used in this way, and asked if a minimum level of Reserves was required? NM responded that there was no legal limit.
- 5.7 **RESOLVED:**
(1) That progress on the current net revenue budget for 2023/24 and its current forecast outturn position is noted
(2) That Option 1 for the net revenue budget for 2024/25 is approved.
(3) That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is noted.

6. Partner presentation - Cannock Chase Forest Plan 2024-2034

- 6.1 Shona Morton, Forestry England presented the refresh of the Forest Plan for Cannock Chase Forest. This is a felling and restocking plan for the 10 year period, 2024-2034. The proposed species to be re-stocked will help to build resilience to the impacts of climate change and pests and diseases. Nature will be encouraged in the plan through a mix of clearfell and stripfell; the establishment of a broadleaf buffer along the Sherbrook; improving ride structure; and increasing the number of trees of special interest. Landscape interest will be retained and key viewpoints will be kept open, for example, from Castle Ring. The recreational offer remains focussed on Fair Oak Valley /

Tackeroo. The presentation is attached to these minutes. The Plan will be open for consultation for 6 weeks from early January.

6.2 SM clarified that this is a high level holistic plan rather than operational plan and doesn't get into detail, such as, equestrian use. RB highlighted the value of the Forest for birds like crossbill, siskin, redpoll, tawny owl, long-eared owl and goshawk, and that it was beneficial to have a mix of ages of plantations and clear-fell and strip-fell to suit a wide variety of species.

6.3 Councillor Wilson (VW) thanked Shona for her presentation.

6.4 **RESOLVED:**
That the refresh of the Cannock Chase Forest Plan 2024-34 is noted.

7. **Accessibility audit and guide**

7.1 The preparation of an accessibility audit and guide for Cannock Chase followed on from a Diversity and Inclusion Study carried out in 2022, and was funded through the Access for All Fund. The aim is for Cannock Chase to become an accessible destination.

7.2 Steven Misfud MBE of Direct Access presented the approach to the audit and guide, as well as the recommendations emanating from it. The aim for Cannock Chase to become an accessible destination is a long-term journey, with the emphasis on inclusion rather than compliance. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

7.3 IM set out the next steps as:

- Sign off the audit and guide
- Share with partners to ensure they are comfortable with the findings
- Promote the guide on the National Landscape website and encourage partners to share on their own platforms
- Assess the recommendations and prepare a way forward for implementation taking advantage of funding through the Access for All Fund
- Incorporate the recommendations into the next refresh of the AONB Management Plan

7.4 Councillor Wilson (VW) thanked Steven for his presentation.

7.5 **RESOLVED:**
That the update on the preparation of an accessibility audit and guide for Cannock Chase is noted.

8. **Cannock Chase National Landscape Annual Conference**

8.1 Sam Hall (SH) presented a paper setting out a proposal for the next Annual Conference of Cannock Chase National Landscape. The date of Thursday 25th April 2024 is provisionally earmarked, and the proposed theme is nature recovery. The National Landscape Team will be responsible for the programme content, promotion and event management. Anticipated costs comprise venue hire, lunch and refreshments.

8.2 Councillor Pearce (AP) asked a question about attendees paying a small amount. IM responded that Joint Committee has previously resisted this as it could be a deterrent to attendance.

8.3 **RESOLVED:**

That the proposed arrangements for the 2023/24 Annual Conference are approved.

9. **Changes to AONBs**

9.1 IM presented a paper informing members on the major changes for AONBs that are in preparation and considered their implications:

- New duty to ‘further the purpose of AONBs’
- Enhanced AONB Management Plans
- Targets and outcomes framework for Protected Landscapes
- Guidance for AONB and National Park Management Plans
- The establishment of the Protected Landscapes Partnership
- National Landscapes name and rebrand
- Resourcing

9.2 Since the preparation and circulation of the paper, the Government had published its long-awaited response to the Landscapes (Glover) Review. This repeated several previously known announcements (for example, additional project funding, the Protected Landscapes Partnership, strengthened duties on relevant authorities, a new national park, new national forest and 2 new community forests). It confirmed that there would be no second statutory purpose for AONBs, no statutory consultee status, and no additional powers to remove vehicle rights of access to the countryside. It made no mention of core funding and any proposed increase in resources to deliver extra commitments. It promised a review of funding models for protected landscapes and to explore how National Landscapes can contribute more to the plan-making process.

9.3 IM advised that without additional resources, AONBs will struggle to deliver against our statutory purpose, and our ability to deliver meaningful outcomes will be constrained.

9.4 **RESOLVED:**

That the changes to AONBs are noted.

10. **Planning update**

10.1 IM updated Members on the number and type of planning consultations that the Team had received since 1st January 2023. 107 planning consultations had been received, the majority of which were for minor developments (eg, alterations and extensions to existing dwellings). Representations and comments had been provided on 39 of these.

10.2 Following the Government’s announcement cancelling HS2 north of Birmingham, IM informed Members that the Trent Sow Parkland and Cannock Chase HS2 Group had sought a number of assurances from HS2 including honouring the Environmental

Enhancement programme in full; meeting closure costs of the Group; and clarity on the demobilisation and reinstatement of worksites and compounds in the Trent Sow area.

10.3 KC mentioned that the planners at Lichfield District Council hold occasional lunchtime learning sessions that the National Landscape Team might want to attend.

10.4 **RESOLVED:**
That progress on planning matters is noted.

11. **Delivery of National Landscape activities**

11.1 IM updated members on recent activities carried out by the National Landscapes Team.

11.2 **RESOLVED:**
That progress on the delivery of key activities is noted.

12. **Date, time and venue of next meeting**

12.1 This has been confirmed for Monday 18th March, 2.30-4.30 PM, The Main Conference Room, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Wolseley Centre ST17 0WT

PART TWO (circulation of minutes restricted to members of the Joint Committee)

The Chairman moved:

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

13. **Expressions of interest for advisors to the Joint Committee**

13.1 Members considered and approved 5 expressions of interest from organisations/individuals offering to become non-voting advisors on the Joint Committee.

Item 4**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.

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

7. 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 four-year programme and is provided by Defra and is additional funding on top of the annual core grant that the AONB receives.
8. The detailed net position for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is set out in Appendix 4 and is compared to the approved budget of £502,890. The forecast outturn against the programme is £412,890 which will result in an underspend against the grant of £90,000 which will have to be repaid to DEFRA.

Reserve

9. The balance on the Cannock Chase AONB Reserve currently stands at £70,488 for 2023/24. A summary of the Reserve is attached as Appendix 5.
10. 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.
11. These priorities are reviewed annually in December of each year.
12. It is anticipated that the balance on this reserve at the end of 2023/24 will be £55,944. This is after taking account of transfers into the reserve of £604 for income/sales, £246 great war hut donations, £1,000 admin fee for administering the SDF projects along with transfers from the reserve of £5,000 to fund the website development and £11,354 to fund the core budget shortfall.

Equalities Implications

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

Legal Implications

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

Resource and Value for Money Implications

15. 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

16. 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

17. The following recommendations are made to the Joint Committee:
 - (1) That progress on the current net revenue budget for 2023/24 and its current forecast outturn position is noted.
 - (2) That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is noted.

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Cannock Chase AONB Core & Project Costs

Forecast for 2023/2024

	Budget	2023 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Core Budget				
Salaries	189,450	136,487	165,186	-24,264
Consultancy Costs	0	29,053	18,613	18,613
Training Expenses	1,510	1,199	1,510	0
Travel and Subsistence	700	936	1,000	300
Staff and Associated Costs	191,660	167,674	186,309	-5,351
Office Equipment	1,400	1,782	2,000	600
Annual Audit	0	0	0	0
Volunteer Costs	500	0	0	-500
National Liaison	3,160	2,928	2,928	-232
Print & Publicity	4,140	2,239	2,793	-1,347
AONB Website	0	0	5,000	5,000
Annual Conference	2,000	-1,067	2,000	0
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	1,720	1,871	3,550	1,830
Partnership Running Costs	9,000	9,000	9,000	0
Core Budget Subtotal	213,580	184,428	213,580	0
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	613	9,987	-13
AONB Projects	15,150	-1,614	59,363	44,213
SDF/AONB Projects Subtotal	25,150	-1,001	69,350	44,200
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	238,730	183,427	282,930	44,200
Funded By:				
DEFRA Grant				
Core	-147,600	-147,602	-147,600	0
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	-10,000	-10,000	0
AONB Projects	-15,150	-15,150	-15,150	0
DEFRA Grant Subtotal	-172,750	-172,752	-172,750	0
Local Authority Contributions				
Lichfield District Council	-2,460	-2,503	-2,503	-43
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,460	-2,503	-2,503	-43
Cannock Chase District Council	-9,840	-10,010	-10,010	-170
Stafford Borough Council	-9,840	-10,010	-10,010	-170
Staffordshire County Council	-24,600	-24,600	-24,600	0
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-49,200	-49,626	-49,626	-426
Sales and Donations	0	0	0	0
Membership Fee Income	0	0	0	0
National Landscapes	0	0	-3,000	-3,000
DEFRA Access for All - Year 2	0	0	-41,200	-41,200
Website Development Contribution from reserve	0	0	-5,000	-5,000
Funding from(+)/to reserve(-)	-16,780	0	-11,354	5,426
Total Funding	-238,730	-222,378	-282,930	-44,200

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Sustainable Development Fund

Budget Update for 2023/24

	Budget	Spent or Committed to Date	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects				
West Midlands Ringing Group - Nightjar thermal drone	3,706	0	3,705	-1
John Bamford Primary School - wildlife garden	3,500	0	3,500	0
West Hill Primary School - bat, bird and wildlife boxes	486	486	486	0
Beaudesert Park Farm - improved learning opportunities	1,308	0	618	-690
West Midland Bird Group Accrual	0	127	127	127
Unallocated Spend	0	0	551	551
Approved Projects Total	9,000	613	8,987	-13
Admin Fees	1,000	0	1,000	0
SDF Funding Transfer to AONB Projects	0	0	13	13
TOTAL	10,000	613	10,000	0

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

AONB Projects

Budget Update for 2023/2024

	Budget	Spent or Committed to Date	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects				
Future Guardians of Cannock Chase	1,610	1,610	1,610	0
Museum of Cannock Chase display	188	88	188	0
Brindley Heath, Milford Common, RAF Hednesford Trails	290	0	290	0
Walking Cannock Chase promoted routes	500	0	0	-500
Dark Skies - CPRE Stargazing Event 21/02/2024	606	0	606	0
Cannock Chase Charitable Fund - Legal Oversight	1,500	0	1,500	0
AONB Adder Land Owner Training Day	500	500	500	0
Stream Corridor & Aquatic Invertebrate Survey	5,250	6,200	6,200	950
Deer Impact & Activity Survey	3,257	0	3,506	249
Corten Steel Great War Hut Panel Costs	335	0	335	0
Deer Management Strategy Artwork Production	500	0	0	-500
22/23 Project Accrual Variation	0	428	428	428
National Landscape Rebrand Implementation	0	0	3,000	3,000
Access for All - Year 2	0	0	41,200	41,200
Approved Projects Total	14,536	8,826	59,363	44,827
Currently Unallocated	614	0	0	-614
Re-allocation of Funds to SDF Projects	0	0	-13	-13
Additional DEFRA Funding	0	0	0	0
National Landscapes Association	0	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000
Access for All - Year 2	0	0	-41,200	-41,200
TOTAL	15,150	5,826	15,150	0

Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant

Forecast for 2023/2024

	Budget	2023 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Farming in Protected Landscapes Expenditure:				
Programme Administration	41,540	20,248	31,356	-10,184
Programme Advice & Guidance	70,630	40,497	45,239	-25,391
Project Spend	390,720	133,751	336,295	-54,425
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	502,890	194,497	412,890	-90,000
Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant	-502,890	-38,968	-412,890	90,000
Total Funding	0	155,529	0	0

Cannock Chase AONB Reserve

Financial Year	Opening Balance	Income/Sales	Great War Hut Donations	Membership Fees	Visitor Survey Work	Website Development	Admin Fees	Transfer to/from Reserve	Balance of Admin Fees / Underspends	Interest	Transfer To Fund Core Service	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	50	594				1,000	1,026	2,026	1,372		70,448
2023/2024	70,448	604	246			-5,000	1,000				-11,354	55,944
		15,529	840	7,673	27,409	-5,000	43,744	-37,214	6,530	4,103	-11,354	55,944

Item 6**Partner presentation – Cemex****Item for:**

Information

Author:

Verbal presentation by Matthew Shorland, Development Manager, Cemex

Financial implications:

None

Recommendations:

The Committee notes the presentation and is invited to ask questions.

- Sets out agreed policies incorporating specific objectives which will help secure that vision.
 - Identifies what needs to be done, by whom, and when, in order to achieve these objectives.
 - Identifies the means by which objectives and actions will be reviewed.
6. It is a plan for the place, not for the National Landscape Partnership.

Review of AONB Management Plans

7. The CRoW Act describes how a management plan review should take place:

Where a conservation board or relevant local authority review any plan under this section, they shall—

- (a) determine on that review whether it would be expedient to amend the plan and what (if any) amendments would be appropriate,
 - (b) make any amendments that they consider appropriate, and
 - (c) publish a report on the review specifying any amendments made.
8. Appendix 1 sets out the proposed stages of the review of the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan and the tasks that need to be undertaken, by whom and by when.
9. The Cannock Chase National Landscape Team will undertake the review on behalf of the local authorities in consultation with partner organisations, landowners, stakeholders, parish and town councils, community groups and the general public.
10. AONB Management Plans fall under the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) regulations and therefore a SEA is required for new or reviewed plans. The AONB Management Plan review must also be subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) to assess any effects on the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation that lies within the protected area. To provide independent scrutiny, it is proposed that both assessments are undertaken by suitably qualified consultants.

Strengthened duty ‘to further the purpose of AONBs’

11. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 – Clause 245 ‘Protected Landscapes’ has replaced the duty *‘of regard’* (Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) with a stronger requirement on relevant authorities to *‘must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area’* when discharging their functions in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
12. The duty is a statutory one and applies to all relevant authorities when discharging any function that affects an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Relevant authorities include all levels of government, local planning authorities and other decision makers, government agencies, any person holding public office, and ministers. Statutory undertakers are also covered by the duty.

13. It is anticipated that the government will provide guidance on how the duty should be applied in due course. In the meantime, and without prejudicing that guidance, Natural England advises that:
- The duty to ‘seek to further’ is an active duty, not a passive one. Any relevant authority must take all reasonable steps to explore how the statutory purposes of the protected landscape can be furthered.
 - The new duty underlines the importance of avoiding harm to the statutory purposes of protected landscapes but also to seek to further the conservation and enhancement of a protected landscape. That goes beyond mitigation and like for like measures and replacement. A relevant authority must be able to demonstrate with reasoned evidence what measures can be taken to further the statutory purpose.
 - In relation to development, the proposed measures to further the statutory purposes of a protected landscape, should explore what is possible in addition to avoiding and mitigating the effects of the development, and should be appropriate, proportionate to the type and scale of the development and its implications for the area and effectively secured. Natural England’s view is that the proposed measures should align with and help to deliver the aims and objectives of the designated landscape’s statutory management plan. The relevant protected landscape team/body should be consulted.
14. The new duty is applicable to all actions of relevant authorities, not just those relating to planning. In undertaking actions that impact or could potentially impact on National Landscapes and their settings, the relevant authority must be able to demonstrate how they have actively sought to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape. The way in which the purpose of designation might be furthered, or the evidence of the genuine attempt to seek to do so, should be open to scrutiny.

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

15. On 31 January 2024 the Government published a [Targets and Outcomes Framework](#) for how it expects England’s Protected Landscapes to achieve outcomes from the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023.
16. Ten targets were announced – five for nature, three for climate change, and two for people and place (Appendix 2). Three of the targets (1, 7 and 8) are for all 44 English Protected Landscapes combined and will therefore need to split between them. Each individual Protected Landscape, working with relevant local partners and supported by Natural England, will set their own contribution to these targets. Apportioned targets will be agreed within 18 months of the publication of the framework (ie, by July 2025).
17. The targets are for the Protected Landscapes as places (the geographical area covered by the designation). The targets are non-statutory, but are expected to be embedded in AONB Management Plans.
18. A suite of indicators set out in the framework will be used to measure progress towards the targets and outcomes. Natural England will be responsible for collating data to

demonstrate how Protected Landscapes are progressing towards their targets, and this information will be published as part of the Environmental Improvement Plan Annual Reporting process.

19. The publication of these targets, alongside the strengthened duty in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act are seen by Government as significant levers in helping National Landscapes play an even bigger role in restoring nature, tackling climate change, conserving our nationally important places and providing access for all.
20. However, they will require Protected Landscapes teams to deliver, via Management Plans, unprecedented levels of coordination and collaboration between landowners, land managers, relevant authorities, and the people living and working in these landscapes. Success will also be contingent on proper financial resources being made available to fund work on the ground, as well as ensuring that essential policy tools, for example, the new Environmental Land Management Scheme, are delivered in a joined-up way that encourages farmers and land managers to help achieve these targets.

Recommendations

21. The following recommendation is made to the Joint Committee
 1. The Committee authorise the review of the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2025-30.
 2. Members note the strengthened duties towards AONBs and the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

Appendix 1

Timetable for review of Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan for 2025-30

Including required Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

TASK	WHO	EXPECTED TIMETABLE
STAGE 1 - FORMALITIES AND NOTIFICATION		
Authorisation from local authorities to undertake review on their behalf	Joint Committee	18 Mar 24
Agree process and timetable of review	Joint Committee	18 Mar 24
Notify Natural England (issue Notice S90(1)) and other stakeholders of the review, including requirement for SEA/HRA	NL Team	By 31 Mar 24
CONCLUSION OF STAGE 1		31 Mar 24
STAGE 2 - SCOPING		
Promote the review of the Management Plan (webinar and	NL Team	Apr 24

Annual Conference)		
Publish update to State of the AONB report	NL Team	Apr/May 24
Review delivery and impact of current management plan, continuing relevance of policies and actions, and gaps	NL Team with Task and Finish Groups	Apr/May 24
Gather information relating to new evidence/ issues from the AONB Partnership and general public, via online questionnaire	NL Team	Apr/May 24
Scope the framework for SEA/HRA, setting context and objectives, establishing baseline evidence and indicators (stage A), and consult with statutory agencies	NL Team	Apr/May 24
List and assess relevance of new strategies/ plans (national and local)	NL Team	May 24
Identify key issues, priorities, and main areas requiring update or new work	NL Team	June 24
Collate observations and insight from scoping exercise and present scoping report to Joint Committee to agree the form and scale of the review	Joint Committee	Jul 24
CONCLUSION OF STAGE 2		31 Jul 24
STAGE 3 - REVIEW		
Based on the outcome of the scoping exercise, propose amendments to the management plan	NL Team with Task and Finish Groups	Aug 24
Draft revised management plan (Strategy and Delivery Plan) with proposed amendments	NL Team	Aug/Sept/Oct 24
Assess effects of objectives, policies & actions and for SEA/HRA and develop alternatives. (Stage B). An element of independent review is required.	Independent consultant	By 30 Nov 24
Collate new draft plan and Environmental Report for SEA/HRA(Stage C) plus non-technical summary.	Independent consultant	By 30 Nov 24
Approve Consultation Draft of the revised Management Plan, subject to amendments	Joint Committee (special meeting)	Oct 24
CONCLUSION OF STAGE 3		31 Oct 24
STAGE 4 - CONSULTATION & APPROVAL OF FULL PLAN		
Run public consultation on new draft Management Plan and SEA/HRA report (Stage D). (8 week period).	NL Team/ Partnership	Nov/Dec 24
Consider comments from consultation and amend plan	NL Team	Jan/Feb 25
Report on consultation and suggested amendments	NL Team	Jan/Feb 25
Send to Natural England for formal observations	NL Team	Jan/Feb 25
Consider comments from formal observations and amend plan	NL Team	Jan/Feb 25
Approve final Management Plan	Joint Committee	Mar 25 -

Send approved Management Plan to Secretary of State and disseminate	NL Team	31 March 25
Publish Statement on how SEA/HRA was taken into account and changes made.	AONB Team	Mar 25
CONCLUSION OF STAGE 5		31 Mar 25
STAGE 5. IMPLEMENTATION / DELIVERY		
Prepare first Business Plan of the new Management Plan, and begin to deliver activities	NL Team / National Landscape Partnership	Apr 25 onwards
Implement and monitor the Plan and its effects (SEA/HRA Stage E).	National Landscape Partnership	April 25 onwards

Appendix 2

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

Protected Landscape targets

Thriving plants and wildlife targets (5 targets)

Target 1. Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).

Target 2. Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.

Target 3. For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.

Target 4. Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.

Target 5. Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change targets (3 targets)

Target 6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.

Target 7. Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.

Target 8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environmental targets (2 targets)

Target 9. Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.

Target 10. Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes

Item 8 **AONB Business Plan 2023-25 end-year one review**

Item for: Information

Author: Ian Marshall, Team Leader

Financial implications: Business Plan activities are funded through AONB core funding provided by Defra, together with any externally funded programmes, and the actions of partner organisations

Recommendations: That members:

- (1) note progress achieved against year 1 of our current Business Plan (2023/24 activities)
- (2) note the indicative priorities for year two (2024/25)

Background

1. Our Business Plan details how the National Landscape Partnership itself, notably through its dedicated staff team, operates to deliver its contract with Defra and the commitments in our AONB Management Plan 2019-24 (extended to 31 March 2025). It ensures that the partnership continues to effectively conserve and enhance Cannock Chase through targeted deployment of financial and staff resources and building on the strong links with local people and groups.
2. At the meeting of the Joint Committee on 12th July 2023 members approved a new two year AONB Business Plan for the period 2023-25. This is the final Business Plan that sets out the operational delivery of our current AONB Management Plan. This report updates members on progress to deliver year 1 activities of that plan and sets out some indicative priorities for year 2.

Progress against Year 1 (2023-24)

3. The appended Business Plan shows the progress that has been achieved against the actions set out around our five themes - Landscape Character and Planning, Wildlife and Nature, Historic Environment, Experience and Enjoyment, Communities and Business, as well as measures to ensure effective Governance and Communication.
4. Progress against actions at the end of 2023-24 is described and traffic lighted red, amber, green. Our general progress against each of the themes can be gauged from the table below.

Theme	Nos of actions	Red	Amber	Green	No planned activity in yr 1
Landscape Character and Planning	12	1	2	8	1
Wildlife and Nature	15	2.5	0	10.5	2
Historic Environment and Culture	6	1	1	3	1
Experience and Enjoyment	10	2	0	2	6
Communities and Business	11	2	1	8	0
Governance	15	2	2	10	1
Communications	19	2	3	14	0
TOTALS	88	12.5	9	55.5	11

5. The picture overall is a favourable one. Of the 77 actions planned for year one of the Business Plan, some 55.5 (72%) have been delivered or are in progress and on track. A further 9 actions (12%) are in progress but taking slightly longer to deliver than anticipated and will be concluded in year two. 12.5 actions (16%) have not been started for various reasons (capacity within the Team and wider Partnership, shifting priorities, lack of opportunities, dependent actions not being progressed etc). They will be re-considered for inclusion within year two of the Business Plan, or omitted if they are no longer considered to be required/worthwhile.

In-year variations

6. The following in-year variations have impacted on the delivery of the Business Plan:
- The National Landscapes re-name and re-brand has generated considerable additional work to begin to implement changes to our communication and promotional materials.
 - A hack to our website diverted staff to rebuilding our website.
 - The appointment of an additional part-time Farming in Protected Landscape Officer in August 2023 generated additional expressions of interest in the programme but, unfortunately, these have not all translated into applications. Consequently, unspent budget has been returned to the national FiPL Programme.
 - The announcement of additional year 2 funding from the Access for All Fund has been welcome, and has allowed more of our accessibility objectives to be fulfilled.
 - The announcement of the National Landscapes Association Annual Conference 2024 being jointly hosted by Cannock Chase is involving staff in planning preparations.
 - Gathering the evidence and insight for the new State of the AONB Report 2023 has been time-consuming. The delayed publication of the Targets and Outcomes Framework as well as the continued absence of new AONB Management Plan guidance has hampered the process.

Indicative priorities for year 2 (2024-25)

7. Indicative priorities for year two against the AONB Management Plan themes are set out in the table below.

Management Plan Theme	Indicative priorities for 2024-25
Landscape Character and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish Highways Design Guide • Promote and deliver Yr 4 of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme, and manage programme close-down • Celebrate 20th anniversary of Fixed Point Photography project
Wildlife and Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to 30 by 30 and publication of Nature Recovery Plan • Finalise a list of priority species and list of invasive non-native species of conservation concern • Publish Deer Management Strategy
Historic Environment and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish historic environment strategy

Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deliver conservation, access and interpretation measures • Condition assessments of non-designated heritage assets
Experience and Enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and deliver Yr 3 of the Access for All Fund • Prepare updated strategies for interpretation and visitor management • Develop local arts projects
Communities and Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and promote Cannock Chase Fund for business and voluntary giving • Expand Future Guardians of Cannock Chase programme into schools • Re-issue Sense of Place toolkit for local businesses
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the AONB Management Plan 2025-30 • Establish Cannock Chase Fund for business and voluntary giving • Deliver our allocation of the Government’s additional £10 million funding for Protected Landscapes to restore habitats and improve access
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the National Landscapes re-name and re-brand • Refresh communications strategy • Deliver conferences

Recommendations

12. The Committee is requested to

- (1) note progress achieved against year 1 of our Business Plan (2023-24 activities)
- (2) note the indicative priorities for year 2 (2024-25)

Appendix (separate attachment)

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Business Plan 2023-25
Year 1 Work programme – endpoint review

Item 9 Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

Item for: Information

Author: Colin Manning and Karen Davies, Farming in Protected Landscape Officers

Financial implications: The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is funded by Defra, and is separate from National Landscape core funding

Recommendations: The Committee notes the report and is invited to ask questions

Background

1. 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 protected landscapes 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 National Landscapes and National Parks, as well as outside if there is a benefit to the Protected Landscape and its objectives.
3. The programme opened in July 2021, and runs until 31 March 2025, having been extended for an additional year.
4. This report summarises the local achievements of the programme at the end of year three, and presents some learning points and priorities for the 4th year and closure of the programme.

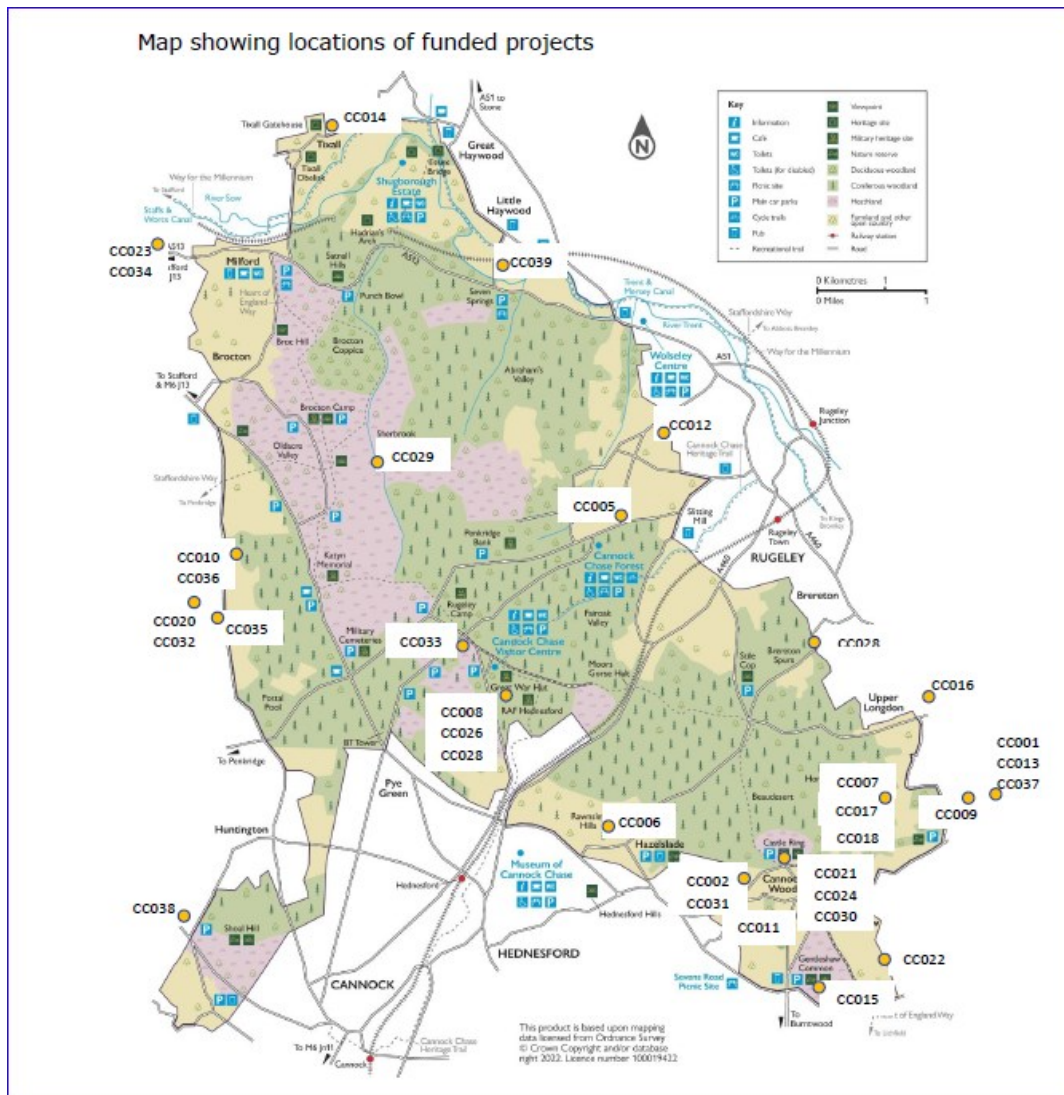
Programme management

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

Progress Yrs 1-3 (2021-24)

6. Since the project started and up to end of February 2024, there have been 174 expressions of interest that led to 39 full applications to the programme. 38 of these projects were awarded grants. The total value of grants awarded to date is £503,000.
7. By the end of February 2024 the programme had delivered the following outputs with more projects underway to be completed by the end of the financial year:

- 5,373 metres of new hedgerow planted
 - 479 native trees planted
 - 809 ha habitat improvements
 - 3 projects using biodegradable tree guards
 - 9 projects have had a focus on species recovery including adder surveys, White-clawed crayfish translocation, bare earth scrapes for invertebrates and nest boxes for bats and birds.
 - 98 volunteers involved in delivering schemes, from tree planting and heathland management to crayfish translocation
 - 300 children have experienced a farm visit or visit in school from a farm education specialist
8. The nature of farming on the Chase means that most applications have been concentrated around the fringes, as areas within the core of the Chase are not eligible due to their nature which includes commercial forestry and heathland management works funded through other schemes.
9. Many projects are located in the south east of the National Landscape where there is a network of holdings with smaller fields and hedged boundaries. These have included tree and hedgerow planting and protection, as well as protecting watercourses from livestock. A cluster of projects has also developed to the western boundary across the flatter landscapes, which have tended to focus on mostly hedgerow planting with trees along with small scale tree planting and parkland restoration.



10. Farm engagement has involved direct contact through letters, emails, phone calls and farm visits. Over 150 farmers and land managers have had direct contact, along with agri advisers, consultants, local pubs and land management associations and organisations. These include National Farmers Union, Country Landowners and Business Association, Parish Council Association and Staffordshire Smallholders' Association.
11. There have been two farm engagement events covering arable farming, technology and veteran trees and diversification and education. These were attended by 36 individuals which then has generated eight expressions of interest and two projects so far.
12. The national Defra FiPL team visited in February 2024 to visit projects and discuss the programme. They found the visit useful and interesting.

Priorities for year 4, 2024-25

13. The total budget for 2024-25 is £555,264, of which £445,953 is allocated to projects, with the remaining amount for project support, delivery, assessing applications general administration.

14. Project priorities are to continue to engage with horse owners and support them in managing their land sustainably; establish relationships with those who have never engaged with funded programmes and; support regenerative farming with both small and larger landowners.

Learning points from the programme

15. This is the first time there have been resources for the National Landscape Team to engage with farmers and landowners and offer support and funding to develop and deliver projects. An increase in funding for this and next year has allowed a second part time officer to be recruited in Autumn 2023.
16. Working from a very low level of engagement, it has taken time to develop relationships with the farming community and promote the programme. However, this is now showing results, with a number of applicants having made more than one successful application. This is either due to increased ambition, or staged projects.
17. The relationship building phase of the programme has been lengthy and has led to fewer projects being developed than anticipated, with a projected underspend of £140,000 at the end of March 2024. However, £339,000 has been allocated to projects in this financial year.
18. The unpredictability of the weather over the last two years has played a major part in projects struggling to complete some activities, particularly fencing where machinery has not been able to access land due to flooding.
19. As well as the flexibility in funding for applicants, the other aspect of FiPL that has been particularly well received by the farming community is the programme being run locally with officers who understand the context of their setting.

Future of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

20. FiPL was intended to be a short term programme as a focus to support farmers within Protected Landscapes. Its national success enabled the programme to be extended for one year until 31st March 2025.
21. At the current time, there is no information available for the future of the programme post 31st March 2025. The current position is that all projects must be completed and funding claimed by 31st March 2025. Employment contracts for FiPL officers also end on this date.
22. There has been discussion within the national core FiPL working group regarding the end of the programme but they are not yet able to advise Protected Landscapes on any closedown processes.
23. The absence of any funding to continue the work of FiPL will immediately end any farm engagement work by the National Landscape team and impact its capability to directly influence outcomes for climate, nature, people and place.

24. The work undertaken to build relationships with farmers and land managers in the National Landscape and support good practice, cannot be continued within the core National Landscape Team.
25. From 1st April 2025, the options for farmer wishing to undertake projects involving environmental improvements are the Sustainable Farming Incentive or Countryside Stewardship. There are also a number of other Governments Schemes that are more focused including the Farming Investment Fund and those based around trees from the Forestry Commission.

Further information

26. 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/

Recommendation

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

Item 10**National Landscape re-brand****Item for:**

Information

Author:

Verbal report of the Communications Officer

Financial implications:

The National Landscape Association has made available £3,000 to each National Landscape towards the costs of implementing the re-brand locally.

Recommendations:

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

Item 11**Conferences****Item for:**

Information

Author:

Verbal report of the Communications Officer

Financial implications:

The National Landscape budget includes an allocation of £2,000 for the Cannock Chase Annual Conference.

Financial provision for the National Landscapes Annual Conference is arranged by the National Landscapes Association, and is covered through sponsorship and ticket sales.

Recommendations:

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

Item 12

Date, time and venue of next meeting

July 2024 TBC (Meeting and AGM)