



Cannock Chase National Landscape

**Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership
Meeting of the Joint Committee
10th March 2025 at 14.00 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.	Time	Item	Item for	Page
1	14:00	Welcome and introductions		3
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3	14:07	Minutes of the meeting held on 9 th December 2024	APPROVAL	4
4	14:10	Public questions		10
5	14:20	Finance report (a) <i>To note progress on the current net revenue budget for 2024-25 and the current forecast position</i> (b) <i>To note progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme</i> Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee	(a) INFORMATION (b) INFORMATION	11
6	14:30	Review of the AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (extended to 2025) <i>To report to members performance against the current edition of the Management Plan.</i> Report of the Team Leader	INFORMATION	17
7	14:45	AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 and associated reports (a) <i>To consider the responses from the public consultation of the Draft Plan, and key changes arising</i> (b) <i>To approve the Final Plan for adoption with any amendments determined at the meeting</i> Report of the Team Leader	(a) INFORMATION (b) DECISION	20
8	15:15	Cannock Chase Investment project <i>To update members about Staffordshire County Council's investment to develop a</i>	INFORMATION	22

		<i>Cannock Chase National Landscape Discovery Centre</i> Report of Sarah Bentley, Head of Environment and Countryside		
9	15:30	Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme <i>To update members about outputs of year 4 of the programme, and plans from 1 April 2025</i> Verbal report of the FiPL Officers	INFORMATION	25
10	15:45	Annual Conference 2025 <i>To update members about arrangements for the Cannock Chase National Landscape Annual Conference 2025</i> Verbal report of the Communications Officer	INFORMATION	25
11	15:55	Date, time and venue of next meeting <i>July 2025 (meeting and AGM) TBC</i> <i>December 2025 TBC</i>		25

Item 1 **Welcome and introductions**

Item 2 **Apologies for absence**

Item 3	Minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2024
Item for:	Approval
Author:	Ian Marshall, Team Leader
Financial implications:	None
Recommendations:	The Committee approves the minutes of the meeting and considers any matters arising.

**Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership
Meeting of the Joint Committee
Monday 9th December 2024 at 14:00 HRS**

Held at the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Wolseley Centre, ST17 0WT

(Draft) Minutes

Attendees

Voting Members present

Cllr Tony Pearce	(TP)
Cllr Victoria Wilson	(VW)
Cllr Janice Silvester-Hall	(JSH)
Cllr Mike Davies	(MD)

Representing

Stafford Borough Council
Staffordshire County Council
Lichfield District Council
South Staffordshire Council

Officers

Ian Marshall	(IM)	National Landscape Team
Samantha Hall	(SH)	National Landscape Team
Richard Harris	(RH)	National Landscape Team
Claire Geoghegan	(CG)	National Landscape Team
Karen Davies	(KD)	National Landscape Team
Catherine Mann	(CM)	Staffordshire County Council
Sarah Bentley	(SB)	Staffordshire County Council
Nikki Mihajlovic	(NM)	Staffordshire County Council
John Follette	(JF)	Staffordshire County Council
Alex Yendole	(AY)	Stafford Borough Council
Paul Rigby	(PR)	South Staffordshire Council

Advisers

Trevor Warburton	(TW)	Friends of Cannock Chase
Sarah Burgess	(SBu)	CPRE Staffordshire
Glen Probert	(GP)	Independent
Antony Jones	(AJ)	Independent
Gez Hill	(GH)	Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles
George Sharp	(GS)	Cannock Chase SAC Partnership
Matthew Shorland	(MS)	Cemex

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Councillor Pearce 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: Roger Broadbent (West Midland Bird Group), Frances Beatty (CLA), Wendy Bannerman (British Horse Society), Doug Smith (British Horse Society), Paddy Harrop (Forestry England), Bill Waller (Stafford Borough Council), Louise Rose (Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles), Councillor John Preece (Cannock Chase Council), Cherry Doyle (independent), Jackie Wyke (independent)

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2024

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th July 2024 were approved as an accurate record (nominated by VW and seconded by TW). The following matters arising were noted (numbers refer to those in previous minutes):

- 3.1. Liz Garbutt, Landscape Planning Officer will be leaving the Team on 31 January.
6.2. A contract for the first phase of a peatland assessment has been commissioned.

3.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the previous meeting are approved.

4. Sustainable Development Fund

- 4.1 RH advised the Committee that whilst guidelines for the operation of the fund are in place, Terms of Reference for the Panel are not. This paper sought to remedy this situation with appended Terms of Reference for approval, as well approval of the constituency of the Panel and the nomination of an elected Member to serve on the Panel.

4.2 **RESOLVED:**

- 1. *Agreed Terms of Reference for the Panel***
- 2. *Endorsed the constituency of the Sustainable Development Fund Assessment Panel***
- 3. *Confirmed Councillor Victoria Wilson as the elected Member representative on the Panel***

5. AONB Management Plan 2025-2030

- 5.1 IM presented the Consultation Draft for the new AONB Management Plan 2025-2030. Whilst much of the current Plan is still relevant and has been carried forward, the new Plan differs in a number of ways:

General changes

- Greater ambition – responded positively to the Government’s agenda for Protected Landscapes to do more for the nation.
- Inclusion of mandatory and local targets

- Arranged around four themes that reflect the Government's ambitions for Protected Landscapes to deliver more for Nature, Climate, People and Place.
- Greater emphasis on collaboration and accountability, that looking after Cannock Chase is a shared responsibility
- Brought up to date - responds to the current forces for change and filled in the gaps in the current Plan.

Specific changes

Vision

- Shorter, reduced from 100 words to 10 words. But, sentiments have not been lost – they have moved into strategic aims for each of the four themes.

Nature. Many of the policies and associated actions are unchanged but they have been added to and elaborated, for example:

- Our proposed contribution to 30by30, and also what we can deliver by 2035 and 2040.
- Highlights planned habitat restoration and creation schemes outside protected sites
- 10 Champion species
- Proposal to explore the feasibility and desirability for a super nature reserve to be declared across land ownership boundaries to elevate the importance of the core of the NL for nature.

Climate. The current Plan barely considers climate change so most of the policies and associated actions are new. It concentrates on what we can bring, and what we can influence and deliver as a Partnership that isn't already being done by others.

People. Greater emphasis on inclusion, empowerment and improving our welcome. Many of the policies and associated actions are unchanged, but again they have been added to. For example, it includes:

- A commitment to prepare a Recreation Strategy
- Investment programme to improve the visitor infrastructure
- Greater emphasis on the Rights of Way network, within and outwith.
- Invest in support for rural skills (but a bit weak).

Place. The new Plan highlights the importance of wildness and tranquillity with new policies for Dark Skies and undergrounding powerlines to improve the visual appearance of the landscape.

Delivery Plan. As in the current Plan, a Delivery Plan lists all of the actions, and identifies the lead and key partners for each action. This time it also indicates the scale of resources required, and the timescale for delivery.

Appendices. Appendices include AONB/NL guidance documents that support the policies and actions in the AONB Management Plan, and AONB national policies and legislation.

5.2 The consultation will comprise an online questionnaire that focuses on the priorities set out in the Plan, and will run for 6 weeks. Flyers and posters together with a hard copy of the Plan will be put in 14 libraries and community libraries around the Chase. A media release will be issued, an newsletter will be issued to all 2,600 subscribers, and everyone in the National Landscape Partnership will receive a direct email invitation to comment on the Plan. There will then be a tight turnaround to bring the Final Plan back to Joint Committee on 10 March.

5.3 The Plan generated the following discussion:

- TP welcomed the emphasis on nature recovery and addressing climate change.
- PR asked for an explanation of the proposed designation of a super Nature Reserve? IM explained that the inclusion of a proposal to explore the feasibility and desirability of a super Nature Reserve is twofold: Firstly, to encourage landowners to work across boundaries and delivery nature recovery at a landscape-scale. Secondly, to elevate the importance of the Chase with the public. VW felt it was a positive proposal.
- JSH queried the consultation process. SH explained that feedback is being sought through an online questionnaire which will be promoted through a media release, social media and enewsletter.
- TP sought clarification on the relationship between the Management Plan and the LNRS? SB explained that the LNRS is due to complete in 2025. It will provide a broader framework for nature recovery across the whole of Staffordshire, within which Cannock Chase will sit as a core area.

5.4 **RESOLVED:**

That the Consultation Draft of the Management Plan is approved for release for consultation, without any amendments.

6. **Finance Report (Part one) – Revenue Budget Forecast 2024-25**

6.1 NM advised the following:

Revenue Budget update 2024/25

- The current forecast outturn position is a breakeven position.
- £9,013 of the Sustainable Development Fund is spent, leaving £987 unallocated
- Currently £5,585 of the original £57,440 budget against AONB Projects and £8,855 of the original £70,750 budget against Access for All Projects remains unallocated.

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

- The current forecast position is a break even position.

Reserve

- It is anticipated that the balance on the reserve at the end of 2024/25 will be £63,160, which will then be used to offset the transfer out of £13,240 to fund the 2024/25 budget shortfall.

6.2 **RESOLVED that:**

- 1. Current progress on the current net revenue budget for 2024/25 and its current forecast outturn position is noted.***
- 2. Spend on the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is noted.***

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

7.1 The date and venue of the next meeting of the Joint Committee is confirmed as:

- *Monday 10 March 2025, 2-4 pm, (Wolseley Centre)*

TP requested a report of the activities of the SAC Partnership is brought to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

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".

8. **Finance Report (Part two) – draft Revenue Budget for 2025-26**
9. **Staffing update and proposals**

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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.

Item 5 **Finance report**

Item for: Noting and Decision

Author: Nikki Mihajlovic, Senior Finance Business Partner

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

Recommendations:

1. That progress on the current net revenue budget for 2024/25 and its current forecast outturn position is noted.
2. That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is noted.

Background

1. The Joint Committee in its role under the AONB Partnership Agreement is responsible for the management of the core funding from DEFRA and the co-ordination of the partner projects.
2. This paper sets out progress on the current net revenue budget for 2024/25 and its current forecast outturn position.
3. The recommendations represent an effective way to continue to carry forward the implementation of the Management Plan for the Cannock Chase National Landscape (AONB) Partnership.

Revenue Budget Update 2024/25

4. The approved budget for the AONB for 2024/25 is £390,520. This includes one-off capital and revenue uplifts from Defra, as well as the third year of Defra Access for All funding.
5. The forecast outturn position for AONB Core and Projects Costs is set out in Appendix 1. This shows the nominal net spend to date of £204,785. The predicted outturn for the end of the financial year totals £385,572, giving rise to an underspend of £4,948. Any underspends will have to be repaid back to DEFRA. This is after taking account of a transfer of £13,240 from the AONB Reserve to fund the core budget shortfall.
6. Staffing and associated costs have been higher than budgeted due to the need to engage the services of a landscape planning consultant to cover for staff absence. These costs have been offset, however, by lower than expected expenditure on areas such as print and publicity and core activity, as well as an adjustment of £1,239 brought forward from financial year 2023/24. Core budget expenditure is, therefore, predicting a breakeven position.
7. The individual projects, totalling £10,000 for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) including the £1,000 administration fee, are set out in Appendix 2. Currently £989 of the original £10,000 budget remains unallocated, along with an adjustment that relates to the previous financial year of £107, which is giving rise to a forecast underspend of £1,095.

8. The individual projects, totalling £57,440 for the AONB Projects and £70,750 for Access for All Projects are set out in Appendix 3. Currently £144 of the original £57,440 against AONB projects and £ 3,302 of the original £70,750 against Access for All projects budgets remains unallocated, along with an adjustment that relates to the previous financial year of £507, which is giving rise to a total forecast underspend of £3,853.

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

9. Since July 2020 the National Landscape Team has been delivering Defra's 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 National Landscape receives.
10. 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 £555,264. The forecast outturn against the programme is £555,264 which will result in a breakeven position.
11. An additional sum of £92,529 was secured from Defra for an Historic Building Restoration Grant (HBRG) for the restoration of an historic barn at Beaudesert Park Farm, and is show separately in the budget, the forecast outturn against this element of the programme is £92,529, which will result in a breakeven position.

Reserve

12. The balance on the Cannock Chase AONB Reserve currently stands at £69,401 for 2024/25. A summary of the Reserve is attached as Appendix 5.
13. 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.
14. These priorities are reviewed annually in December of each year.
15. It is anticipated that the balance on this reserve at the end of 2024/25 will be £62,410. This is after taking account of transfers into the reserve of £275 for income/sales, £5,974 admin fee for administering the SDF projects and managing the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, and a transfer from the reserve of £13,240 to fund the core budget shortfall for 2024/25.

Equalities Implications

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

Legal Implications

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

Resource and Value for Money Implications

18. 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

19. 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

20. The following recommendations are made to the Joint Committee:
 - (1) That progress on the current net revenue budget for 2024/25 and its current forecast outturn position is noted.
 - (2) That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is noted.

Appendix 1

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Cannock Chase AONB Core & Project Costs

Forecast for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Core Budget				
Salaries	196,960	151,423	189,723	-7,237
Consultancy Costs	5,000	11,536	17,536	12,536
Training Expenses	1,510	2,534	2,534	1,024
Travel and Subsistence	700	276	526	-174
Staff and Associated Costs	204,170	165,769	210,319	6,149
Office Equipment	1,400	1,559	1,839	439
Print & Publicity	25,750	7,056	22,207	-3,543
Annual Conference	2,000	0	2,000	0
Volunteer Costs	500	18	210	-290
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	6,350	1,238	4,918	-1,432
National Liaison	3,160	3,075	3,075	-85
Partnership Running Costs	9,000	9,000	9,000	0
2023/2024 Year-end B/fwd Adjustments	0	-1,239	-1,239	-1,239
Core Budget Subtotal	252,330	186,478	252,330	0
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	-107	8,905	-1,095
AONB Projects	57,440	9,980	56,789	-651
Access 4 All	70,750	8,434	67,548	-3,202
SDF/AONB Projects Subtotal	138,190	18,307	133,242	-4,948
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	390,520	204,785	385,572	-4,948
Funded By:				
DEFRA Grant				
Core	-189,890	-142,418	-189,890	0
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	-7,500	-8,905	1,095
AONB Projects	-57,440	-43,080	-56,789	651
Access 4 All	-70,750	-70,749	-67,548	3,202
DEFRA Grant Subtotal	-328,080	-263,746	-323,132	4,948
Local Authority Contributions				
Lichfield District Council	-2,460	0	-2,460	0
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,460	-2,460	-2,460	0
Cannock Chase District Council	-9,840	-9,840	-9,840	0
Stafford Borough Council	-9,840	-9,840	-9,840	0
Staffordshire County Council	-24,600	-24,600	-24,600	0
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-49,200	-46,740	-49,200	0
Funding from(+)/to reserve(-)	-13,240	-275	-13,240	0
Total Funding	-390,520	-310,761	-385,572	4,948

Appendix 2

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Sustainable Development Fund

Forecast for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects				
Sensory gardens, Pye Green Academy - Greenheart Learning Park	2,761	0	2,761	0
O'Connor Ecotherapy Gateway, The O'Connor Gateway Trust	2,554	0	2,554	0
St Joseph's Woodland project, St Joseph's R.C. Primary School, R	2,696	0	2,696	0
Unallocated Spend	989	0	0	-989
2023/2024 Yearend B/fwd Adjustments	0	-107	-107	-107
Approved Projects Total	9,000	-107	7,905	-1,095
Admin Fees	1,000	0	1,000	0
SDF Funding Transfer to AONB Projects	0	0	0	0
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	10,000	-107	8,905	-1,095

Appendix 3

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

AONB Projects & Access For All

Forecast for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects:				
AONB Projects:				
Stream corridor & aquatic invertebrate survey - phase 2	6,950	0	6,950	0
Check the Chase - purchase of 3 tablets (£436.18 each)	1,309	0	1,309	0
Check the Chase - IT tablets and licences	972	972	972	0
Check the Chase - purchase of 3 annual Coreo licences each year for further 4 years	4,666	0	4,666	0
Management Plan - SEA and HRA	5,800	0	5,800	0
eDNA kits for white-clawed crayfish, signal crayfish/plague tests prior to translocation/restocking works	1,380	0	1,380	0
Priority list of INNS species for Cannock Chase	375	375	375	0
Tinker Taylor Video and Photography Project	14,950	10,640	14,950	0
Dark skies event X 2 (SWT sessions, February 2025)	510	0	510	0
Dark skies event X 2 (Keele sessions, February 2025)	260	0	260	0
Photography for Dark Skies event	300	0	300	0
Peatland assessment	7,450	0	7,450	0
Peatland assessment (data search charge)	375	0	375	0
Adder film	4,000	0	4,000	0
Place attachment	4,000	0	4,000	0
Championing inclusion outdoors	4,000	0	4,000	0
Currently Unallocated - AONB	144	0	0	-144
2023/2024 Year-end B/fwd Adjustments	0	-507	-507	-507
AONB Approved Projects Total	57,440	11,480	56,789	-651
Access for All - Year 3 - Projects				
MoCC - resurfacing of sculpture trail	8,434	8,434	8,434	0
NT - accessible gates	10,000	0	10,000	0
NT - mobile induction loops	3,000	0	3,000	0
NT - tramper purchase	8,500	0	8,500	0
NT - accessible path in the forest garden	7,647	0	7,647	0
NT - accessible picnic tables across the estate - £800 each X 5	4,172	0	4,172	0
NT - Shaping Shugborough viewing bench	5,000	0	5,000	0
Purchase of replacement tramper	8,548	0	8,548	0
Tactile interpretation maps for RAF Hednesford trail, Brindley Heath trails, Milford Common trails. Up to 6 maps @ £520 each for design and printing 100 copies of each)	1,560	0	1,560	0
Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles - Equipment for inclusive cycling initiative on Cannock Chase	4,910	0	4,910	0
GWVH - interactive kiosk and pc, software development, delivery, installation and training	5,777	0	5,777	0
Currently Unallocated - Access for All	3,202	0	0	-3,202
Access For All Approved Projects Total	70,750	8,434	67,548	-3,202
TOTAL	128,190	19,914	124,337	-3,853

Appendix 4

Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant

Budget Update for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Farming in Protected Landscapes Expenditure:				
Programme Advice & Guidance	68,825	52,258	92,598	23,773
Programme Administration	40,486	5,261	16,713	-23,773
Project Spend	445,953	46,889	445,953	0
Historic Building Restoration Project Beaudesert Park Farm	92,529	92,529	92,529	0
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	647,793	196,936	647,793	0

Appendix 5

Cannock Chase AONB Reserve

Financial Year	Opening Balance	Income/Sales	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	-2,363	-1,863	293		71,512
2016/2017	71,512	1,475	553			1,565	-108	1,457	132		75,129
2017/2018	75,129	1,471	52			1,809	30,703	32,512	189		109,353
2018/2019	109,353	169	104			2,056	34,361	36,417	685		146,728
2019/2020	146,728					2,307	-94,792	-92,485	577		54,819
2020/2021	54,819					1,307	0	1,307	78		56,204
2021/2022	56,204	5,740				1,000	3,418	4,418	44		66,406
2022/2023	66,406	644				1,000	1,026	2,026	1,372		70,448
2023/2024	70,448	1,051				1,000	0	1,000	3,195	-6,292	69,401
2024/2025	69,401	275				5,974	0	5,974		-13,240	62,410
		16,844	7,673	27,409	0	49,718	-37,214	12,504	7,297	-19,532	62,410

exceeded against 26 (73%) of the actions, and less good against 7 actions (20%). Two actions have not been delivered (7%). Taken overall, performance against the actions (as measured in terms of outputs) is considered to be favourable.

Effectiveness of the Management Plan

6. The accompanying report summarises the bare facts of what has been achieved during the lifetime of the current edition of the Plan. The effectiveness of the actions for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB has not been measured, but a number of significant positive effects arising from the implementation of the Management Plan can be identified:

- **Conserving and enhancing the special qualities** - Implementation has resulted in tangible environmental benefits for the designated landscape and surroundings, particularly for its natural and cultural heritage and landscape quality.
- **Land management** – For the first time the National Landscape has had the opportunity and resources to take meaningful actions to improve environmental quality through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
- **Addressing gaps** – The Team has worked with partners to address issues over and above those set out in the Plan, in particular climate change, dark skies, and inclusion.
- **Improved knowledge and understanding** - A total of 27 new studies and publications have been delivered on a range of topics, improving our knowledge and understanding about the Chase and informing our decision-making.
- **Informed and consistent decision-making** – The National Landscape Team has given informed and consistent advice and guidance on land use change and management, supported by the publication of a range of technical guidance, for example Building Design Guide, Views and Setting Guide and Good Lighting Guide.
- **Inclusion** - Significant headway has been made for more meaningful engagement with new audiences and under-served sections of society, for example, farmers and land managers (facilitated by the Farming in Protected Landscape programme), people with disabilities and their families and carers (facilitated by the Access for All Fund), and young people (through the Future Guardians programme).
- **Empowerment** – 23 local community groups have delivered environmental outcomes in their own localities, supported through the Sustainable Development Fund to the tune of £50,000. Volunteers continue to be supported, including the re-opening of the Milford Information Hut. The Farming in Protected Landscape programme has empowered landowners and land managers to take preventative and restorative actions that increase resilience to climate change, recovers nature, and improves accessibility, both individually and collectively.
- **Investment** - The National Landscape and surrounding area has benefitted from significant financial investment on the ground during the Plan period - including £1.5 million from HS2, £192,000 from National Grid, £734,000 from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme for grants to farmers and land managers, £92,500 from the Historic Building Restoration grant and £173,000 from the Access for All Fund. Partners have invested, and are continuing to invest substantially to improve visitor facilities and deliver environmental outcomes.
- **Collaboration and co-ordination** – The National Landscape has convened collaborations between partners and agencies to deliver a range of projects, for example, the Future Guardians programme (SAC Partnership, scouts, guides,

libraries and DoE), adder conservation programme (multiple agencies, 11 landowners, volunteers, research institutes), communication campaigns, as well as issues requiring an area-wide response, for example the surge in visitors during the Covid pandemic lockdowns. There has also been significant collaboration between FiPL participants to share knowledge, skills and equipment and offer each other encouragement. Value has been added to what individual partners might be able to achieve on their own.

- **Raising awareness** – A single national brand to create identity has been developed and promoted, alongside the Cannock Chase Code to help change behaviours.

7. It is concluded, therefore, that the Management Plan has added value and delivered greater benefits for the National Landscape than a 'do-nothing' scenario. The National Landscape offers excellent value for money – all of the achievements coming at a cost to the Staffordshire resident of just 20p per person per year.

Recommendations

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

Recommendations

7. The Committee is requested to approve the final AONB Management Plan for adoption, with any amendments determined at the meeting.

Appendices

1. Report on the Public Consultation of the Draft Management Plan.
2. Cannock Chase National Landscape AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 (Final).
3. Strategic Environmental Assessment Report for the 2025/30 National Landscape Management Plan.
4. Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report for the 2025/30 National Landscape Management Plan.

Item 8 Cannock Chase Investment project

Item for: Information

Author: Sarah Bentley, Head of Environment and Countryside,
Staffordshire County Council

Financial implications: There are no financial implications for the National Landscape.

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

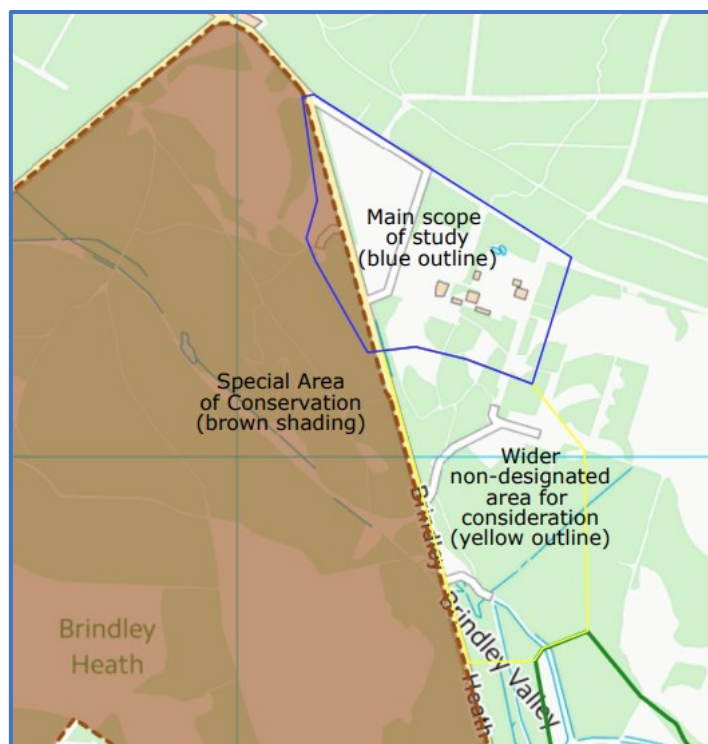
Background

1. In 2024 Staffordshire County Council announced a major £18 million funding commitment to invest in and improve its green spaces over the next five years. The majority of this investment is targeted at Marquis Drive (Cannock Chase Country Park) and Chasewater Country Park, plus investment in the Staffordshire Way.
2. The investment supports the Council's *We are Staffordshire* theme around the great outdoors, its destination development work, and enhancing Staffordshire as a great place to live and work by creating an attractive, accessible and inclusive destination for all.
3. The investment at Marquis Drive is focused on the visitor centre within the County Council's Cannock Chase Country Park. The ambition is to develop a high quality, multi-purpose Discovery Centre, that welcomes visitors to the Country Park and introduces them to the National Landscape. £10 million is allocated for this investment.

Feasibility and master planning

4. Work has been underway since autumn 2024 on feasibility and master planning studies, leading to presenting development options for the site. This feasibility work is also being supported by the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership as the re-development of the site will reduce recreational pressure on the Special Area of Conservation and will raise awareness of the special nature of Cannock Chase, its habitats and species.
5. The feasibility work will take around a year to complete and comprises three phases:
 - Phase 1: Research, analysis and initial engagement (Sept '24 – March '25).
 - Phase 2: Options Development and Appraisal (Jan – June '25).
 - Phase 3: Development of & engagement on preferred option, including masterplan, drawings, CGIs and costed business plan (June – October '25).
6. The study includes extensive periods to allow for multiple phases of stakeholder and community engagement. The engagement is key to understanding site current uses, shaping the ideas for investment, and informing the choice of preferred development options.

7. The area of focus of the study is shown on the map below. The development options will be informed by the relationship of the site to the wider country park and National Landscape, as well as understanding the visitor offers provided elsewhere on the Chase.



Design options

8. Architects have been asked to present a range of options to create an exemplar discovery centre for Cannock Chase, offering a sustainable destination within which to engage with the National Landscape, country park and SAC with minimal impact to sensitive environments. It will re-imagine facilities to create an environmentally friendly, high-quality, fully accessible, and inclusive visitor offer. This will result in a sustainable, viable visitor destination at Marquis Drive which is befitting of, and complementary to the setting. The designs must also be financially sustainable and affordable.

How will the National Landscape be involved?

9. An online user survey, including map-based questions, is live and it is hoped that Members and partners have had the opportunity to complete it. The weblink to the survey is: <https://app.maptionnaire.com/q/489u8wgr3eo6>.
10. Interviews are planned with SCC Cabinet Member, Local Members and individual partners this Spring. Engagement is also planned with parish councils and other community groups (including schools and Friends of Cannock Chase), some of which scheduled for early March. Further opportunities for engagement will be available as and when the site development proposals start to take shape.
11. 'Countryside Investment' E-newsletters will be circulated during 2025 aligned to key project milestones. Anyone can subscribe for updates. Details of how to do this will also be shared following this briefing.

Recommendations

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

Item 9	Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
Item for:	Information
Author:	Verbal report of Karen Davies and Claire Geoghegan, 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

Item 10	Annual Conference 2025
Item for:	Information
Author:	Verbal report of Samantha Hall, Communications Officer
Financial implications:	The National Landscape budget includes an allocation of £2,000 for the Cannock Chase Annual Conference.
Recommendations:	The Committee notes the report and is invited to ask questions.

Item 11	Date, time and venue of next meeting
	July 2025 TBC (Meeting and AGM)
	December 2025 TBC (Meeting)
	March 2025 TBC (Meeting)