



Cannock Chase National Landscape

Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership AGM and meeting of the Joint Committee Monday 14th July 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	Election of Chair and Vice Chair This item to be overseen by John Rowe, Honorary Secretary of the Joint Committee	DECISION	3
2	14.05	Welcome and introductions		3
3	14.10	Apologies for absence		3
4	14.10	Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2025	APPROVAL	4
5	14.15	Public questions <i>To note and respond to any questions received in advance from members of the public</i>	NOTE AND RESPOND	10
6	14.25	Finance report <i>(a) To note the final outturn position for 2024/25.</i> <i>(b) To note progress on the current net revenue position for 2025-26.</i> <i>(c) To note progress on spend on the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme</i> Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee	INFORMATION INFORMATION INFORMATION	11
7	14.40	National Landscape Annual Review 2024-25 <i>To report to members the achievements of the National Landscape and seek approval to publish, with any amendments</i> Report of the Communications Officer	DECISION	21
8	14.55	National Landscape Annual Conference 2025 <i>To report to members the evaluation and feedback from the Annual Conference</i> Verbal report of the Communications Officer	INFORMATION	23
9	15:10	Business Plan 2025-2026 <i>To approve the priorities for the National Landscape Team for 2025-2026</i> Report of the Team Leader	DECISION	24

10	15:40	AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 – Performance Management <i>To approve proposed new arrangements for performance monitoring and reporting</i> Report of the Team Leader	DECISION	27
11	15.55	Date, time and venue of next meetings <i>To agree dates and times for future meetings, provisionally scheduled for:</i> <i>Monday 8 December 2025, 2-4 pm (Wolseley Centre)</i> <i>Monday 16 March 2026, 2-4 pm, (Wolseley Centre)</i>	DECISION	31

Item 1 Election of Chair and Vice Chair**Item for:** Decision

This item to be overseen by John Rowe, Honorary Secretary of the Joint Committee.

Item 2 Welcome and introductions**Item 3 Apologies for absence**

Item 4	Minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2025
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 10th March 2025 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)

Representing

Stafford Borough Council
Staffordshire County Council
Lichfield District 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
Paul Rigby	(PR)	South Staffordshire Council

Advisers

Trevor Warburton	(TW)	Friends of Cannock Chase
Sarah Burgess	(SBu)	CPRE Staffordshire
Gez Hill	(GH)	Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles
George Sharp	(GS)	Cannock Chase SAC Partnership
Roger Broadbent	(RB)	(West Midland Bird Group)
Frances Beatty	(FB)	(CLA)
Jackie Wyke	(JW)	Independent
Cherry Doyle	(CD)	Independent

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: Doug Smith (British Horse Society), Antony Jones (Independent), Councillor Mark Evans, (South Staffordshire Council), Glen Probert (Independent).

3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2024**

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th December 2024 were approved as an accurate record. The following matters arising were noted (numbers refer to those in previous minutes):

Item 8.5 (1)

IM reported that since the December meeting Defra has confirmed that the core grant to National Landscapes for 2025/26 will remain a flat cash settlement based on current (2024/25) levels, i.e., no cost-of-living increase. This means that the revenue budget for 25/26 will be as presented to Committee in December, and that to balance the budget we will not be recruiting into the vacant role of Landscape Planning Officer. IM had written to each of the local planning authorities informing them that landscape planning advice will no longer be provided from April 2025.

Defra has also confirmed that National Landscapes will be receiving a capital uplift for activities that contribute to 30by30, and that the Access for All programme will continue, although individual allocations are unknown.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme will also continue for a further 12 months, with an allocation for Cannock Chase National Landscape of £552,889 – more or less the same as for FY 24/25.

Item 8.5 (2)

As resolved, TP confirmed that he had written to local MPs drawing their attention to the proposed cuts and their impacts on the National Landscape, and that he had received a reply from one MP.

Item 8.5 (3)

As resolved, TP had written to local authorities asking that they consider increasing their financial contributions. One authority had responded positively.

4. **Public questions**

No questions had been received.

5. **Finance report**

- 5.1 NM advised the following:

Revenue Budget update 2024/25

- The predicted outturn for the end of the financial year is £385,572, giving rise to an underspend of £4,948. Any underspend will need to be returned to Defra.
- The forecast underspend arises from a combination of the Sustainable Development Fund (£1,095), AONB projects (£144) and Access for All projects (£3,302).

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

- The current forecast position is a breakeven position. The budget shows an additional sum of £92,529 for an Historic Building Restoration Grant.

Reserve

- It is anticipated that the balance on the reserve at the end of 2024/25 will be £63,410.

- 5.2 TP asked if any underspend can be transferred to Reserves? NM clarified that it couldn't and needs to be returned to Defra.
- 5.3 JSH urged that the budget is fully utilised so that no monies were returned to Defra. IM encouraged partners to speak to him if they had any projects they could quickly deliver or purchase.
- 5.4 TP queried the admin fee for managing the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. NM clarified that the host authority can claim a small amount from the programme as a contribution to management and finance costs incurred by the County Council.
- 5.5 **RESOLVED that:**
- 1. 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.***

6. Review of the AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (extended to 2025)

- 6.1 IM presented a review of performance against the current edition of the Management Plan. The slide presentation accompanies these minutes. In summary:
- The operating context changed considerably during the lifetime of the Plan.
 - Performance was rated as good or exceeded against 26 of the 35 actions (73%), less good against 7 actions (20%), whilst 2 actions were not delivered (7%).
 - Overall, performance against the outputs is considered favourable.
 - A number of significant positive benefits arising from the implementation of the Management Plan have been identified.
 - It is concluded that the Management Plan has added value and delivered greater benefits than a 'do-nothing' scenario.
 - All of the achievements come at a cost to the Staffordshire resident of just 20p per person per year – representing great value for money.
- 6.2 TP noted that Action A10 was assessed as having achieved less-good progress, as no car park improvements had been delivered. He understood that a legal agreement between the County Council and SAC Partnership was still outstanding. GS confirmed

that the legal agreement had just been received, and this should now facilitate the works progressing.

- 6.3 RB raised concerns about birch invasion and its impacts on high value wildlife sites. IM responded that birch is being removed from a number of heathland sites, for example, by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust on the Connecting Cannock Chase corridors and on Gentleshaw Common, and by Staffordshire County Council on Cannock Chase Country Park.
- 6.4 VW praised the amazing amount of work that had been achieved and urged for this to be promoted and celebrated. SH confirmed that the Team will do this.
- 6.5 **RESOLVED that:**
The report is noted.

7. **AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 and associated reports**

- 7.1 IM summarised the feedback received from the public consultation on the draft Management Plan which ran for 6.5 weeks between 16 December 2024 and 27 January 2025. The slide presentation accompanies these minutes. In summary:
- 159 responses received, and 449 separate comments. All of the comments have been considered and individual responses provided.
 - There is a high level of support for the Plan's vision and strategic aims, and priorities for each of the four themes (Nature, Climate, People and Place).
 - Recommended changes to the Plan are minor and essentially points of detail.
- 7.2 An independently undertaken Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment concluded that there are no negative environmental impacts from the Management Plan, and that there are no negative impacts on any European wildlife site.
- 7.3 RB expressed his concern about general disturbance on the Chase from loose dogs, and that he couldn't see this covered in the Plan. IM responded that different recreational users are addressed through a combination of policies in the Management Plan. SB commented that lots of activities are already underway to raise awareness of the impacts of loose dogs, and suggested that the narrative under policy PE2 Treading Lightly, could be expanded to draw attention to the issues. The SAC Partnership's website includes a section relevant to dogs on the Chase <https://cannockchase.org.uk/dogs/>. VW highlighted that monies might be available through the Community Safety Partnership to raise awareness of the issues with dogs. GS mentioned that Burnham Beeches SAC has a Community Space Protection Order in place to control dog behaviour, but has 16 rangers available to enforce it. Any measures need to be carefully balanced with the aspiration to make visitors feel welcome.
- 7.4 FB expressed her concern that the absence of a Landscape Planning Officer will result in unsympathetic development on and around the Chase. IM responded that LPAs will either have to buy-in landscape planning advice or consider impacts of proposed development on the National Landscape themselves. The AONB building design guide

and views and setting guide are both available to inform new development and decision-making.

- 7.5 JSH echoed these concerns and that there was a risk not having a Landscape Planning Officer in the light of forthcoming planning changes. She also highlighted other risks for the Management Plan arising from pressures with the farming community around inheritance tax and climate change.
- 7.6 JSH asked about the geographic area that the Deer Management Strategy will be looking at. IM and RH explained that deer management will need to be co-ordinated within the National Landscape as well as outside.
- 7.7 **RESOLVED that:**
That the Final version of the Management Plan is approved for adoption with an amendment to draw attention to the impacts of dogs.

8. **Cannock Chase Investment project**

- 8.1 SB summarised Staffordshire County Council's major £10 million investment to upgrade the visitor welcome and facilities at Marquis Drive Visitor Centre to a discovery centre befitting a National Landscape. The site lies next to Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation, and offers the opportunity to reduce recreational pressure on the site and to raise awareness of the special nature of Cannock Chase.
- 8.2 Consultants have been appointed to carry out feasibility and master planning studies and will develop three options for the site, with increasing levels of intervention. Members of the Joint Committee are encouraged to complete the online user survey.
- 8.3 TW praised the plans for the site.
- 8.4 **RESOLVED that:**
The report is noted.

9. **Farming in Protected Landscapes programme**

- 9.1 KD and CH updated the Committee about the achievements of the Programme during the four years since its launch in 2021. The slide presentation accompanies these minutes. In summary:
- Total project spend is IRO £976K and total approved projects number IRO 65.
 - The number of projects supported each year has increased year on year, particularly over the last two years with the increase in the number of officers from 1FTE to 1.5FTE.
 - Projects have delivered well against all four programme themes of nature, climate, people and place.
 - Outputs for Nature include: 16 kms of hedgerow, 2,600 trees planted, 5 priority species planted, 187 wildlife boxes, 4 wildflower projects.
 - Outputs for Climate include: 46 ha of heathland restoration. 6 projects featuring water and wetland features.
 - Outputs for people include: 5 primary schools involved, 2 teacher resource packs, 15 interpretation panels, 71 access improvements.

- Outputs for Place include: barn restoration, landscape-scale projects, improving PRoW experience.

9.2 TP noted that for the first time all of the allocation is going to be spent, which is a huge achievement. FB agreed that it is an amazing achievement, and that officers must have been working long hours.

9.3 **RESOLVED that:**
The report is noted.

10. **Annual Conference 2025**

10.1 SH updated the Committee about the plans for this year's National Landscape Annual Conference. It will take place on 19th June at Beaudesert Golf Club and the focus will be the new Management Plan and how we can make it happen. In addition to looking back at the previous year's achievements, external speakers will share their experiences and examples about green funding and finance, delivering positive change on the ground, inclusion and diversity and place attachment. The conference will also include a participatory art commission, and an opportunity for a walk on the golf course to see heathland work in progress.

10.2 **RESOLVED that:**
The report is noted.

11. **Date, time and venue of next meeting**
To be confirmed.

Item 5**Public questions**

Item for: Questions received (in advance) from members of the public

Author: None

Financial implications: None

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

Item 6 Finance report – Revenue Budget 2025/26

Item for: Noting

Author: John Broad, Senior Finance Business Partner

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

Recommendations:

1. That the final outturn position for 2024/25 for the Core, Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), AONB Projects, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme and the closing balance held on the AONB reserve are noted.
2. That the revised net revenue budget is approved and progress on the current net revenue budget for 2025/26 and its current forecast outturn position are noted.
3. That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme is noted.

Background

1. The net revenue budget for 2025/26 was approved by the Joint Committee at its meeting on the 9th of December 2024. In the absence at that time of any announcement from Defra about our core grant settlement, this grant allocation was kept unchanged at the 2024/25 funding level. The five local authorities within Cannock Chase National Landscape financial contributions for 2025/26 remain unchanged from 2024/25 funding levels.
2. Defra has now confirmed that the revenue funding settlement for Cannock Chase AONB for 2025/26 is to remain unchanged from the previous year at £172,750 for Core and project costs., Additional one-off funding has been provided comprising £115,790 for Access For All projects and £151,180 for Capital Uplift Projects. The funding from Defra for 2025/26 totals £439,720, which is an increase of £111,640 when compared to the 2024/25 level.
3. This paper presents progress on the net revenue budget for 2025/26, and its current forecast outturn position. The recommendations represent an effective way to continue to carry forward the implementation of the Management Plan for the Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership.

Final Outturn 2024/25

4. The final net revenue outturn for 2024/25 for Core, Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), and AONB Projects is set out in *Appendix 1* and is compared to the £390,520 approved budget for the year. The final net revenue spend was £348,640 compared to budget resulting in a total underspend of £41,880. Of which, £27,190 relates to Core, SDF £1,095 and AONB Projects of £13,595. To calculate the element of underspend that needed to be paid back to DEFRA the underspend of £27,190, has been reduced to exclude the original contribution from the AONB reserve to balance the 2024/25 budget of £13,240, giving rise to a revised net underspend of £13,950, of which 75% will have to be repaid back to DEFRA.

5. The individual approved projects, totalling £10,000 for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) including the £1,000 administration fee, are set out in *Appendix 2*. This shows an underspend of £1,095 against the original budget allocation of £10,000 which will have to be repaid to Defra.
6. The 2024/25 AONB Projects & Access For All Projects budget allocations and final spend are set out in *Appendix 3*.
7. Approved AONB Projects spent a total of £43,845 when compared to the original budget of £57,440 resulting in an underspend of £13,595. Of which, most of this underspend, £7,638, related to retained, unallocated AONB budget, plus cumulative minor underspends across other AONB Projects totalling £5,957 which will all have to be repaid to Defra. Access for All Projects (Year 3) has fully spent its original budget of £70,750 this year.
8. The detailed net position for the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme is set out in *Appendix 4* and is compared to the original budget of £640,939. The final spend against the programme was £640,927, which resulted in a small underspend against the grant of £12, which will have to be repaid to DEFRA. This is due to reduction in costs originally anticipated for one project.

Revenue Budget update 2025/26

9. The net revenue budget for 2025/26 of £221,950 was approved by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 9th December 2024. In the absence at that time of any announcement from Defra about our core grant settlement, this grant allocation was kept unchanged at the 2024/25 funding level of £172,950. The five local authorities within Cannock Chase National Landscape financial contributions for 2025/26 remain unchanged from 2024/25 funding levels of £49,200.
10. Defra has now confirmed that the revenue funding settlement for Cannock Chase AONB for 2025/26 is to remain unchanged from the previous year at £172,750 for Core and project costs. Additional one-off funding has been provided comprising £115,790 for Access For All projects and £151,180 for Capital Uplift Projects. The funding from Defra for 2025/26 totals £439,720, which is an increase of £111,640.
11. The current forecast outturn position when compared to budget is breakeven, as set out in *Appendix 5*.
12. The level of funding for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) £10,000 remains unchanged from the previous year's allocation. The AONB Projects budget is set at £15,150, Access for All Projects is £115,790 which is an increase of £45,040 when compared to the previous year's allocation, and the new Capital Uplift Projects allocation is set at £151,180 for 2025/26.
13. The individual projects against the £10,000 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) allocation for 2025/26, as set out in *Appendix 6*, have yet to be approved or committed, including the £1,000 administration fee deduction.
14. Indicative individual projects against the AONB Projects, Access for All and the new Capital Uplift Projects for 2025/26 are set out in *Appendix 7*.

15. Indicative AONB projects amount to £14,830 in total, which leaves a small balance of £320 unallocated.
16. Indicative Access for All with projects amount to £107,500, which leaves a balance of £8,290 unallocated.
17. Indicative Capital Uplift Projects with projects amount to £150,830, which leaves a small balance of £350 unallocated.
18. At this early stage of year, AONB approved projects, Access for All projects and Capital Uplift projects are anticipated to break even against their respective budget allocations.

Reserve

19. The balance on the Cannock Chase AONB Reserve at the end of the financial year 2024/25 stood at £84,300, after transfers in of sales income, administration fees (for the Sustainable Development Fund and Farming in Protected Landscapes programme) and interest accrued. The reserve currently stands at £90,885 for 2025/26 after assuming the transfer of SDF and Farming in Protected Landscapes admin fees and sales income into the reserve. A summary of the reserve is set out in *Appendix 8*.
20. 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.
21. These priorities are reviewed annually in December of each year.

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

22. Since July 2020, the AONB has been delivering the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme collaborating with farmers and land managers. This initial 4-year funding programme, provided by Defra, ended on the 31st of March 2025, but has since been extended by an additional year for project delivery. Defra has awarded a total grant allocation of £552,890 to the AONB which is additional funding on top of the annual Core Grant that the AONB receives and the predicted outturn for the programme at the end of the financial year is a breakeven position as shown in *Appendix 9*. This includes £5,000 administration fee deduction.

Equalities Implications

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

Legal Implications

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

Resource and Value for Money Implications

25. 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

26. 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

27. The following recommendations are made to the Joint Committee:
- (1) That the final outturn position for 2024/25 for the Core, Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), AONB Projects, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme and the closing balance held on the AONB reserve are noted.
 - (2) That progress on the current net revenue budget for 2025/26 and its current forecast outturn position are noted.
 - (3) 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

Financial Outturn for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024 Actuals	Variation
	£	£	£
Core Budget			
Salaries	196,960	179,738	-17,222
Consultancy Costs	5,000	14,835	9,835
Training Expenses	1,510	2,534	1,024
Travel and Subsistence	700	808	108
Staff and Associated Costs	204,170	197,915	-6,255
Office Equipment	1,400	2,468	1,068
Print & Publicity	25,750	7,377	-18,373
Annual Conference	2,000	2,000	0
Volunteer Costs	500	22	-478
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	6,350	3,238	-3,112
National Liaison	3,160	3,459	299
Partnership Running Costs	9,000	9,000	0
2023/2024 Year-end B/fwd. Adjustments	0	-339	-339
Core Budget Subtotal	252,330	225,140	-27,190
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	8,905	-1,095
AONB Projects	57,440	43,845	-13,595
Access 4 All	70,750	70,750	0
SDF/AONB Projects Subtotal	138,190	123,500	-14,690
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	390,520	348,640	-41,880

Funded By:			
DEFRA Grant			
Core	-189,890	-179,652	10,238
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	-8,905	1,095
AONB Projects	-57,440	-43,845	13,595
Access 4 All	-70,750	-70,750	0
DEFRA Grant Subtotal	-328,080	-303,152	24,928
Local Authority Contributions			
Lichfield District Council	-2,460	-2,460	0
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,460	-2,460	0
Cannock Chase District Council	-9,840	-9,840	0
Stafford Borough Council	-9,840	-9,840	0
Staffordshire County Council	-24,600	-24,600	0
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-49,200	-49,200	0
Funding from(+)/to reserve(-)	-13,240	3,712	16,952
Total Funding	-390,520	-348,640	41,880

Appendix 2

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Sustainable Development Fund

Financial Outturn for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024/25 Actuals	Variation
	£	£	£
Approved Projects			
Sensory gardens, Pye Green Academy - Greenheart Le	2,761	2,761	0
O'Connor Ecotherapy Gateway, The O'Connor Gateway	2,554	2,554	0
St Joseph's Woodland project, St Joseph's R.C. Primar	2,696	2,696	0
Unallocated	989	0	-989
2023/2024 Yearend B/fwd. Adjustments	0	-107	-107
Approved Projects Total	9,000	7,905	-1,095
Admin Fees	1,000	1,000	0
SDF Funding Transfer to AONB Projects	0	0	0
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	10,000	8,905	-1,095

Appendix 3

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

AONB Projects & Access For All

Financial Outturn for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024/25 Actuals	Variation
	£	£	£
Approved Projects:			
AONB Projects:			
Stream corridor & aquatic invertebrate survey - phase 2	6,950	6,950	0
Check the Chase - purchase of 3 tablets (£436.18 each)	1,309	1,075	-234
Check the Chase - IT tablets and licences	972	972	0
Check the Chase - purchase of 3 annual Coreo licences each year for further 4 years	4,666	4,188	-478
Management Plan - SEA and HRA	5,800	4,700	-1,100
eDNA kits for white-clawed crayfish.signal crayfish/plague tests prior to translocation/restocking works	1,380	150	-1,230
Priority list of INNS species for Cannock Chase	375	375	0
Tinker Taylor Video and Photography Project	14,950	14,300	-650
Dark skies event X 2 (SWT sessions, February 2025)	510	510	0
Dark skies event X 2 (Keele sessions, February 2025)	260	100	-160
Photography for Dark Skies event	400	300	-100
Peatland assessment	7,450	7,450	0
Peatland assessment (data search charge)	375	375	0
Adder film	4,000	4,000	0
Cannock Chase Country Park Purchase of Accessories	406	406	0
Unallocated - AONB	7,638	0	-7,638
2023/2024 Year-end Adjustments	0	-2,006	-2,006
AONB Approved Projects Total	57,440	43,845	-13,595
Access for All - Year 3 - Projects			
MoCC - steps for sculpture trail	8,434	8,434	0
GWH - interactive kiosk and pc, software development, delivery, installation and training	5,777	5,777	0
NT - replacement tramper	8,521	8,521	0
NT - further accessible picnic tables X7	4,172	4,172	0
NT - accessible path in the forest garden	8,482	8,482	0
NT - accessible picnic tables X7	4,172	4,172	0
Cannock Chase Country Park - replacement tramper	8,548	8,548	0
Tactile interpretation maps for RAF Hednesford trail, Brindley Heath trails, Milford Common trails.	1,560	1,560	0
Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles - Equipment for inclusive cycling initiative on Cannock Chase	9,710	9,710	0
Cannock Chase Country Park - binoculars for guided walks	392	392	0
Cannock Chase Country Park - tour guide sound system	382	382	0
National Trust - accessible gates	10,000	10,000	0
Dave Thompson Illustration Ltd - artwork for GWH kiosk	600	600	0
Access For All Approved Projects Total	70,750	70,750	0
TOTAL	128,190	114,595	-13,595

Appendix 4

Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant

Outturn for 2024/2025

	Budget	2024 Actuals	Variation
	£	£	£
Farming in Protected Landscapes Expenditure:			
Programme Advice & Guidance	68,825	87,444	18,619
Programme Advice & Guidance Admin Fee	0	5,156	5,156
Programme Administration	40,486	16,713	-23,773
Project Spend	445,953	445,939	-14
Historic Building Restoration Project Beaudesert Park Farm	85,675	85,675	0
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	640,939	640,927	-12

Appendix 5

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Cannock Chase AONB Core & Project Costs

Forecast 2025/2026

	Budget	2025/26 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Core Budget				
Salaries	169,150	27,495	169,150	0
Training Expenses	1,510	50	1,510	0
Travel and Subsistence	700	142	700	0
Staff and Associated Costs	171,360	27,686	171,360	0
Office Equipment	1,400	596	1,400	0
Volunteer Costs	500	0	500	0
National Liaison	3,160	2,691	3,160	0
Print & Publicity	4,140	0	4,140	0
Annual Conference	2,000	0	2,000	0
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	5,240	0	5,240	0
Partnership Running Costs	9,000	0	9,000	0
Core Budget Subtotal	196,800	30,974	196,800	0
Revenue Projects::				
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	0	10,000	0
AONB Projects	15,150	0	15,150	0
Revenue Projects Subtotal	25,150	0	25,150	0
Capital Projects:				
Access for All Projects	115,790	0	115,790	0
Capital Uplift Projects	151,180	0	151,180	0
Capital Projects Subtotal	266,970	0	266,970	0
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	488,920	30,974	488,920	0
Funded By:				
DEFRA Revenue Grant				
Core	-147,600	0	-147,600	0
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	0	-10,000	0
AONB Projects	-15,150	0	-15,150	0
DEFRA Revenue Grant Subtotal	-172,750	0	-172,750	0
Local Authority Contributions				
Lichfield District Council	-2,460	0	-2,460	0
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,460	0	-2,460	0
Cannock Chase District Council	-9,840	0	-9,840	0
Stafford Borough Council	-9,840	0	-9,840	0
Staffordshire County Council	-24,600	0	-24,600	0
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-49,200	0	-49,200	0
Total Revenue Funding	-221,950	0	-221,950	0
DEFRA Capital Grant				
Access for All Projects	-115,790	0	-115,790	0
Capital Uplift Projects	-151,180	0	-151,180	0
DEFRA Capital Grant Subtotal	-266,970	0	-266,970	0
Funding from(+)/to reserve(-)	0	-585	0	0
Total	-488,920	0	-488,920	0

Appendix 6

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Sustainable Development Fund

Forecast 2025/2026

	Budget	2025/26 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects				
TBC	9,000	0	9,000	0
Approved Projects Total	9,000	0		0
Admin Fees	1,000	0	1,000	0
SDF Funding Transfer to AONB Projects	0	0	0	0
Total	10,000	0		0

Appendix 7

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

AONB Projects, Access For All and Capital Uplift

Forecast 2025/2026

	Budget	2025/26 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects:				
AONB Projects:				
White-clawed crayfish survey traps	830	0	830	0
Red Wood Ant feasibility study	1,500	0	1,500	0
Research & development for place attachment project with young people.	6,000	0	6,000	0
National Poetry Day events	1,500	0	1,500	0
Fixed Point Photography 20 year report	5,000	0	5,000	0
TBC	320	0	320	0
AONB Approved Projects Total	15,150	0	15,150	0
Access for All Projects:				
Research & development - National Landscape road gateway signage options	7,500	0	7,500	0
Research & development - PRoW audit	20,000	0	20,000	0
Staffordshire Way pedestrian gateway (Great Haywood)	15,000	0	15,000	0
Upgrade steps (Milford Common)	7,500	0	7,500	0
Upgrade interpretation panel (Milford Common)	3,500	0	3,500	0
Installation of interpretation panels X3 (Hednesford Hills)	10,500	0	10,500	0
Nest box cameras / wall map (Cannock Chase Country Park)	1,000	0	1,000	0
Upgrade pedestrian bridge (Wolsley Centre, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust)	5,000	0	5,000	0
Upgrade car park entrance signs (Cannock Chase Country Park)	10,000	0	10,000	0
Accessible maps and leaflets (Shugborough Estate)	2,500	0	2,500	0
Viewing bench in Forest Garden (Shugborough Estate)	10,000	0	10,000	0
Youth Arts project (Support Staffordshire)	5,000	0	5,000	0
Installation of interpretation panels (Beaudesert Hall)	10,000	0	10,000	0
TBC	8,290	0	8,290	0
Access For All Approved Projects Total	115,790	0	115,790	0
Capital Uplift Projects:				
Research & development - baseline assessment of sites that can count to 30by30, identify management interventions, including feasibility study of Super NNR	15,000	0	15,000	0
Research & development - Species Action Plans for 5 Champion species	12,500	0	12,500	0
Research & development - carbon sequestration potential	10,000	0	10,000	0
Research & development - peatland field survey and palaeo-environmental analysis leading to identify sites for restoration	20,000	0	20,000	0
Trial installation of SuDS pods (SCC Flood Risk Management)	15,000	0	15,000	0
Trial Eco Churches project (Diocese of Lichfield)	20,000	0	20,000	0
Recreation Delivery Plan to identify interventions to support visitor management	20,000	0	20,000	0
Surface enhancements (RAF Hednesford Trail)	12,730	0	12,730	0
Surface enhancements (Toc-H trail)	15,000	0	15,000	0
Purchase of equipment to rip and re-grade paths to improve the access experience and resilience to extreme weather events (Cannock Chase Country Park)	600	0	600	0
Creation of upgraded and more accessible National Landscape website	10,000	0	10,000	0
TBC	350	0	350	0
Capital Uplift Projects	151,180	0	151,180	0
TOTAL	282,120	0	282,120	0

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	-2,383	-1,883	293		71,512
2016/2017	71,512	1,475	553			1,565	-108	1,457	132		75,129
2017/2018	75,129	1,471	52			1,809	30,703	32,512	189		109,353
2018/2019	109,353	169	104			2,056	34,361	36,417	685		146,728
2019/2020	146,728					2,307	-94,792	-92,485	577		54,819
2020/2021	54,819					1,307	0	1,307	78		56,204
2021/2022	56,204	5,740				1,000	3,418	4,418	44		66,406
2022/2023	66,406	644				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	1,539				6,156	3,712	9,868	3,492	0	84,300
2025/2026	84,300	585				6,000		6,000			90,885
		18,694	7,673	27,409	0	55,900	-33,502	22,398	10,789	-6,292	90,885

Appendix 9

Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant

Forecast 2025/2026

	Budget	2025/26 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Farming in Protected Landscapes Expenditure:				
Programme Advice & Guidance	65,625	16,401	65,625	0
Programme Administration	41,545	1,669	41,545	0
Admin Fee	5,000	0	5,000	0
Project Spend	440,720	0	440,720	0
Total	552,890	18,070	552,890	0

Item 7 National Landscape Annual Review 2024-25

Item for: Decision

Author: Samantha Hall, Communications Officer

Financial implications: Provision for desktop publishing the Annual Review is allowed within the National Landscape budget.

Recommendations: To approve the National Landscape Annual Review 2024-25 for publication, with any amendments.

Background

1. The production of an Annual Review summarising the year's achievements of the National Landscape Partnership is an essential component of the National Landscape's Communication Strategy. It provides an opportunity to:
 - Record formally the Partnership's successes in delivering our core purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Cannock Chase
 - Demonstrate our ability to deliver through examples of our work
 - Showcase what we are about, and why partners would want to work with us
 - Provide financial details of the Partnership and its ability to manage its financial affairs
 - Raise our profile nationally to Defra, that we offer value for money, and that we are contributing within the National Landscape family to the national agenda for protected landscapes.

Overview – National Landscape activities

2. The Annual Review for 2024-25 highlights a selection of the key activities we have delivered with our partners and volunteers under the themes Nature, Climate, People and Place:

Nature

- Adder conservation; the quality of our watery environment; ancient trees; helpful heifers; golf for the birdies; thermal drone technology for recording nightjar; Cannock Chase Forest Plan; stock fencing of Hazelslade Local Nature Reserve; grazing trial at Moors Gorse, conservation work at Gentleshaw Common; marsh violet planting for small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly.

Climate

- Peatland potential; Arcadia forest garden at Shugborough; HS2 tree and hedgerow planting at Haywood Park Farm; star gazing with CPRE Staffordshire and scouts and cubs; FiPL funded tree, woodland and hedgerow planting

People

- Visitor counts on the Chase; SAC botanical survey; raising awareness about heathlands; seasonal engagement wardens; Heath Week; funding through the Access for All fund; community projects funded through the Sustainable Development Funds; Nature Calling training; school participation through FiPL funded schemes; volunteer support.

Place

- Outcomes delivered through the FiPL programme; investing in Cannock Chase Visitor Centre; connecting with the past; Shaping Shugborough; transforming the Chase Heritage Trail; National Landscape video; updated Essential Guide to Cannock Chase; booklet of circular walks; Brindley Hospital album.

Other news in the headlines

- AONB Management Plan 2025-2030; National Landscapes Annual Conference 2024.

Overview – National Landscape finances

3. Financially our core expenditure and income balanced at £0. The Defra grant included one-off uplifts in capital and revenue funding and an additional allocation for a third year of funding from the Access for All Fund.
4. The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme also balanced at £0, and awarded £445,939 of grants for environmental outcomes as well as £85,675 grant for an Historic Building Restoration project.

Recommendation

5. To approve the National Landscape Annual Review 2024-25 for publication, with any amendments.

Annex (issued separately)

Cannock Chase National Landscape Annual Review 2024-25

Item 8**National Landscape Annual Conference 2025****Item for:**

Information

Author:

Verbal report by Samantha Hall, Communications Officer

Financial implications:

The Annual Conference is funded through the National Landscape budget.

Recommendations:

The Committee notes the evaluation and feedback, and is invited to ask questions.

Item 9 Business Plan 2025-26

Item for: Decision

Author: Ian Marshall, Team Leader

Financial implications: Business Plan activities are funded through National Landscape core funding provided by Defra, together with any externally funded programmes and contributions

Recommendations: To approve the Business Plan with any amendments agreed at the meeting.

Background

1. The AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 for Cannock Chase National Landscape was approved by the Joint Committee at the meeting on 10th March 2025, and adopted from 1st April 2025. The Plan is for the National Landscape and sets out all the relevant outcomes to be delivered by 2030 by the key organisations within the area.
2. As one of the delivery organisations, the National Landscape Team has set out how it will deliver its part of the Management Plan in its Business Plan for 2025-2026.

Proposed Business Plan 2025-2026 (Annex 1)

3. The Business Plan sets out the priorities for the Cannock Chase National Landscape Team for 2025-2026, showing how we will deliver our part of the [AONB Management Plan 2025-2030](#) and respond proactively to the challenges and opportunities affecting the National Landscape.
4. The actions and outcomes in Annex 1 have been derived directly from the structure and outcomes in the approved Management Plan. The structure of the Business Plan mirrors the four Strategic Aims of the Management Plan with the addition of our internal organisational objectives around achieving excellence:
 - Nature
 - Climate
 - People
 - Place
 - Achieving excellence
5. The AONB Management Plan includes 60 actions in total. Where an action is not included in our Business Plan this either means that other partners are leading or developing it, rather than the National Landscape Team, or that the action is scheduled later in the lifetime of the Management Plan. We will keep an overview of delivery against all 60 actions with our role to convene partners to progress the Management Plan, and report this annually.

Strategic priorities for 2025-2026

6. The proposed Business Plan identifies a shortlist of strategic projects to help us target the allocation of our in-year resources and make the most of partnership working and any external funding opportunities. A number of this year's priorities are setting the groundwork for future investment programmes and are, therefore, needed early-on in the lifetime of the Management Plan.

Outcomes for Nature

- Researched the potential sites for 30by30 target (Action No. 1) and the feasibility of a super National Nature Reserve (Action No. 9)
- Prepared species action plans for 5 Champion species (Action No. 4)
- Published the Deer Management strategy and agreed implementation plans (Action No. 6)

Outcomes for Climate

- Mapped the extent and depth of peatlands, and carried out field surveys and paleoenvironmental analysis (Action No. 18)
- Assessed the potential, opportunities and costs for increasing carbon sequestration and capture through land use change (Action nos. 17, 18 and 45)

Outcomes for People

- Published a Recreation Management Strategy (Action No. 22)
- Assessed the condition of all PRoW in the National Landscape, and prepared a cost programme of investment (Action Nos 29 and 30)
- Researched road and welcome signage and prepared costed options for investment (Action No. 33)
- Launched the Cannock Chase Charitable Fund (Action No. 40)
- Developed pedestrian gateways for the Staffordshire Way (Action No. (Action No. 33), and other accessibility improvements through the Access for All Fund (multiple actions)

Outcomes for Place

- Published an updated Guide for highways improvement and management (Action No. 49)
- Developed an expression of interest and full application for a powerline undergrounding scheme at Haywood Park Farm (Action No. 50)
- Published an Historic Environment Strategy (Action No. 60)
- Delivered environmental outcomes through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (multiple actions for Nature, Climate, People and Place)

Organisational objectives – achieving excellence

7. The Business Plan includes internally focussed organisational objectives to achieve excellence. These include an objective to improve performance monitoring and reporting against the AONB Management Plan which is considered separately under agenda item 10.

Monitoring and reporting

8. The Team's performance against our Business Plan will be reported to Defra twice yearly – in September and March, and to the Joint Committee at its December and March meetings.

Risk register

9. Appendix 5 of the Business Plan includes our current corporate risk register. This serves as a central repository for capturing and evaluating the key strategic risks we face, their likelihood, potential impact and corresponding countermeasures. Maintaining a comprehensive risk register helps us to proactively manage uncertainties, support our decision-making processes, and mitigate potential harm to our operations.
10. After countermeasures are considered, the highest residual risks are associated with the funding and finances of the National Landscape Team. 2025/26 is the third year running that our budget has operated at a shortfall due to flat-rate funding settlements not keeping up with cost-of-living increases. Previous years' shortfalls have been met by drawing down from Reserves. For 2025/26, however, the shortfall is being met by freezing recruitment into the vacant position of Landscape Planning Officer. Consequently, the National Landscape is currently unable to advise local planning authorities on the impacts of proposed developments on the National Landscape. This places the National Landscape's special qualities at risk of harm from inappropriate development.

Recommendations

11. To approve the Business Plan with any amendments agreed at the meeting.

Annex (issued separately)

Cannock Chase National Landscape Team Business Plan 2025-2026 (draft)

Item 10 AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 – Performance Management

Item for: Decision

Author: Ian Marshall, Team Leader

Financial implications: The cost of developing an online progress reporting system (if progressed) will be met out of the National Landscape budget.

Recommendations: To approve proposed new arrangements for Performance Management with any amendments agreed at the meeting.

Background

1. The AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 for Cannock Chase National Landscape was approved by the Joint Committee at the meeting on 10th March 2025, and adopted from 1st April 2025. The Plan is for the National Landscape and provides a framework for all stakeholders to work together to achieve the National Landscape purposes and conserve and enhance its special qualities.
2. The Plan is structured around four strategic aims: Nature, Climate, People and Place, underpinned by 18 objectives and 39 policy topics. A Delivery Plan of 60 actions sets out how the National Landscape Team and partners will deliver the Management Plan during its five-year lifetime. The lead and principal partners involved in delivering each action are identified.
3. The National Landscape Partnership needs to have in place a robust performance management system so it can check how well it is performing in the delivery of the agreed actions in the Management Plan and report effectively to relevant authorities. [Note: whether the actions are having the desired outcomes in terms of their impacts on the special qualities of the National Landscape itself is a separate consideration].

Need for performance monitoring

4. Performance monitoring establishes how well the National Landscape Partnership is performing against the delivery of the agreed actions together with our achievements against a set of indicators of success. Having in place a robust system will:
 - Keep the Partnership, Defra, stakeholders and the public informed about the implementation of the Management Plan.
 - Enable progress to be tracked against mandatory targets.
 - Help the Partnership to demonstrate that it is making best use of resources to accomplish its outcomes.
 - Highlight any pressure points and areas of weakness, and allow for adjustments to be made where there is slippage with projects and actions, and new issues that need to be addressed.
 - Help to promote ongoing awareness of our ambitions for the Chase, as well as celebrate our successes.

5. Government's expectations for England's protected landscapes have increased in recent years, and this is reflected in the raised level of ambition of the latest edition of the AONB Management Plan. We will be required to deliver and report progress against the Government's:
 - Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework
 - Environmental Improvement Plan
6. In addition, under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 'relevant authorities' have a strengthened duty to seek to further the purposes of protected landscapes. Relevant authorities include all Government departments, any public body and any statutory undertaker. This is an active duty not a passive duty, and obliges a relevant authority to demonstrate they have actively sought to further the purposes of the designation.

Current arrangements for monitoring and reporting performance

7. The National Landscape Team sets out its own contribution to the Management Plan through an annual Business Plan. It monitors and reports progress against delivery to the Joint Committee and also to Defra to support mid-year and end-year claims.
8. There is no similar mechanism in place that systematically captures and reports partner contributions to Management Plan actions.
9. An Annual Review is published to highlight the previous year's main achievements and promote these to the public. This includes a selection of news stories that celebrate the successes of both the National Landscape Team and partner organisations.

Proposed new arrangements for Performance Management

10. There is a need to have in place a more robust and comprehensive Performance Management system that will meet all reporting requirements:

(i) Partner contributions

In order that a full picture of overall progress against the Management Plan can be captured and presented, it is proposed that partner organisations are requested annually to provide updates for activities they have carried out against actions. Numerous partner organisations are involved in delivering the Management Plan, and a template will be prepared and sent to partners to capture updates in a consistent way and for ease of reporting, along the lines of that in Annex 1 (fictitious examples included). Demonstrating how they are supporting the delivery of the Management Plan will help those partner organisations who are 'relevant authorities' to fulfil their statutory duty to seek to further the purposes of the National Landscape.

(ii) Performance reporting website

To improve accessibility, the cost and feasibility of reporting and updating progress via a new 'Performance Reporting' website will be explored. The [Peak District National Park](#) and [Yorkshire Dales National Park](#) are examples of online reporting against their respective Partnership Plans. The presentation of performance data online would clearly identify progress against targets, enable progress to be tracked over time, and contextualise each objective's progress with commentary and analysis.

(iii) Annual Report

Report presented to the Joint Committee summarising the work undertaken by the National Landscape Team and partner organisations, the significant achievements, and any pressure points and issues.

(iv) Annual Review

Continue to publish an Annual Review celebrating the National Landscape Partnership's significant achievements for a public audience.

Recommendations

11. To approve proposed new arrangements for Performance Management with any amendments agreed at the meeting.

Annex 1

Cannock Chase National Landscape AONB Management Plan 2025-2030

Annual monitoring 2025-26 – Request for updates

Notes re. completion:

The table includes the actions where your organisation is the Responsible Partner.

Please fill out full update for activity against these actions for 2025-26 in yellow boxes.

As guidance we recommend that:

- The commentary should be written in third person, past tense
- Aim for short sentences
- Highlight any key issues and/or successes
- Aim for no more than 75 words for each update

***Fictitious examples entered*.**

Actions	Responsible partner	Key indicator (if identified)	Annual update 2025-26
Actions for Nature			
Action no. 4	XXXX	Publish Species Action Plans for all Champion species by 2028	Surveys of 10 ancient oak trees carried out and recorded on Ancient Woodland Inventory. Records also sent to SCC Historic Environment Record. Management proposals prepared, including recommendations for halo thinning of surrounding conifers and birch and successional planting. FiPL application in preparation.
Actions for Climate			
Action no. 15	XXXX	N/A	Two EV charging points installed in XXXX car park, and promoted on website and on social media. Funding came from a combination of XXXX and XXXX. The points have been in constant demand and have received positive feedback from the public.
Actions for People			
Action no. 30	XXXX	Improving access (Identify two new easy access trails)	100 metres of permissive route has been re-profiled and re-surfaced so that it is now suitable for users of all ages and abilities. The route has been promoted on website and in social media.
Actions for Place			
Action no. 59	XXXX	N/A	New interpretation panel installed at XXXX monument, explaining the site's historical development and links with the local area. Local community groups were involved in the research of stories and sourcing historical images. A follow-up educational project is in development with XXXX primary school.

Item 11**Date, time and venue of next meetings**

To agree dates and times for future meetings, provisionally scheduled for:

Monday 8 December 2025, 2-4 pm (Wolseley Centre)

Monday 16 March 2026, 2-4 pm, (Wolseley Centre)