



Cannock Chase National Landscape

Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership Meeting of the Joint Committee Monday 8th December 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.

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1	14.00	Welcome and introductions		3
2	14.05	Apologies for absence		3
3	14.05	Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2025, and matters arising	APPROVAL	3
4	14:10	Public Questions <i>To note and respond to any questions received in advance from members of the public</i>	NOTE AND RESPOND	11
5	14:15	Finance report <i>(a) To note progress on the current net revenue position for 2025-26 and the current forecast position</i> <i>(b) To note progress on spend on the capital uplift and Access for All Fund</i> <i>(c) To note progress on spend of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme</i> <i>(d) To consider scenarios for a draft revenue budget for 2026-27, and identify a preferred option</i> Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee	INFORMATION INFORMATION INFORMATION DECISION	12
6	14:30	Historic Environment Strategy - Consultation Draft <i>To consider and approve for public consultation a draft strategy to understand, care for and celebrate the Chase's historic environment, with any amendments determined at the meeting</i> Report of the Team Leader	DECISION	24
7	14:45	Guide for highways improvement and management <i>To consider and approve an updated Guide, with any amendments determined at the meeting</i> Report of the Team Leader	DECISION	28

8	15:00	National Landscape Association Chair's Conference 2025 <i>To feedback to the Committee issues arising from the Conference held on 20 November, and invite questions</i> Verbal report from the Chair	INFORMATION	31
9	15:10	Local Government Re-organisation in Staffordshire <i>To inform the Committee about the potential implications for the National Landscape arising from Local Government Re-organisation in Staffordshire, and invite questions</i> Verbal update from the Team Leader	INFORMATION	32
10	15:20	Strategic priorities for 2025-2026 <i>To update Committee on progress achieved against the strategic priorities included in the National Landscape Team's Business Plan, and invite questions</i> Report of the National Landscape Team	INFORMATION	33
11	15:40	National Heathland Conference 2026 <i>To update Committee on preparations for the conference which is being held in Cannock Chase National Landscape on 8-10 September 2026, and invite questions</i> Verbal report from the Land Management Officer	INFORMATION	40
		Exclusion of the Public and Press The Chairman to move: "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" Part Two (All reports in this section are exempt)		

Item 1 Welcome and introductions

Item 2 Apologies for absence

Item 3 Minutes of the meeting held on 14th July 2025 and matters arising

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 14th July 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 Hayley Coles	(HC)
Cllr Richard Cox	(RC)
Silvester-Hall)	
Cllr Lisa Wilson	(LW)
Cllr David Williams	(DW)

Representing

Stafford Borough Council
Staffordshire County Council
Lichfield District Council (substitute for Cllr Janice
Cannock Chase Council
South Staffordshire Council

Officers

Ian Marshall	(IM)	National Landscape Team
Samantha Hall	(SH)	National Landscape Team
Peter Hearn	(PH)	Staffordshire County Council
Sarah Bentley	(SB)	Staffordshire County Council
John Broad	(JB)	Staffordshire County Council
John Rowe	(JR)	Staffordshire County Council
Kelly Harris	(KH)	South Staffordshire Council

Louise Rose	(LR)	Cannock Chase Council
Lyn Evans	(LE)	Cannock Chase Council
Laura Beardsmore	(LB)	Cannock Chase Council

Advisers

Trevor Warburton	(TW)	Friends of Cannock Chase
George Sharp	(GS)	Cannock Chase SAC Partnership
Cherry Doyle	(CD)	Independent
Doug Smith	(DS)	British Horse Society

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

- 1.1 The election of Chair and Vice-Chair for the next 12 months was overseen by John Rowe, Honorary Secretary of the National Landscape Joint Committee.
- 1.2 A call for nominations of Chair was made. Councillor Coles and Councillor Pearce both offered to stand. Councillor Cox proposed Councillor Pearce as Chair of the Joint Committee, which was seconded by Councillor Wilson, and carried.
- 1.3 A call for nominations for Vice-Chair was made. Councillor Pearce nominated Councillor Wilson as Vice-Chair, which was seconded by Councillor Wilson, and carried.
- 1.4 **RESOLVED:**
 - (1) That Councillor Tony Pearce is appointed Chair of the National Landscape Joint Committee for the next 12 months.***
 - (2) That Councillor Hayley Coles is appointed Vice-Chair of the National Landscape Joint Committee for the next 12 months.***

2. Welcome and introductions

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

3. Apologies for absence

- 3.1 Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor Janice Silvester-Hall (Lichfield District Council), Richard Harris, Karen Davies and Claire Geoghegan (National Landscape Team), Jeff Sim (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust), Hayley Mival (National Trust), Paul Rigby (South Staffordshire Council), Frances Beatty (CLA), Catherine Mann (Staffordshire County Council), Alex Yendole (Stafford Borough Council)

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2025

- 4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th March 2025 were approved as an accurate record. The following matters arising were noted (numbers refer to those in previous minutes):

Item 3.1. Defra's funding allocations for the National Landscape have now been confirmed and will be reported in today's agenda item 6.

Item 5.1. The final outturn position for the financial year ending 2024/25 will be reported under today's agenda item 6.

Item 7.3. The narrative under Policy PE2 Treading Lightly in the AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 has been amended to draw attention the impacts from dogs, as requested.

Item 7.7. The AONB Management Plan 2025-30 was adopted on 1st April 2025, and sent to the SoS for Farming and Rural Affairs. The Plan is now published and is available in hard copy and digital formats.

4.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2025 are approved.

5. **Public questions**

5.1 Question 1. Can you tell me why Hednesford Hills was not included in the National Landscape and what would we have to do to get it included?

5.2 IM responded:

- He doesn't know why the AONB boundary was drawn as it was in 1958, and what discussions were had at that time about Hednesford Hills or other areas. Records of the correspondence, papers and meetings of the National Parks Commission and local authorities during the 1950s might provide some answers.
- Natural England is responsible for conservation and landscape designations, and has a programme published on the [Natural England's designations programme - GOV.UK](#)
- Natural England is currently only progressing an extension to the Surrey Hills AONB and a potentially new AONB for the Yorkshire Wolds. There is a list of 10-12 protected landscapes wishing for a boundary review. Extensions can take decades (Sussex and Essex Coast and Heaths took 25 years).

5.3 HC asked what benefits AONB designation conferred. IM responded that designation confirms the national importance of the land; places protections in land use policies; and brings partners together to collaborate for the benefit of the area. IM made the point that in addition to Hednesford Hills there might be other areas that warrant consideration for a boundary review.

5.4 **Action: TP requested that some preliminary investigations were carried out and a paper was brought to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.**

5.5 Question 2. What are the chances of an official reduction of the speed limit from 60mph to a maximum 40mph on all roads bordering and traversing all of Cannock Chase?

5.6 IM responded:

- A 40mph advisory speed limit operates across the Chase, with some sections operating with mandatory speed limit reductions -

- Penkridge Bank road nr Post Office Lane reduced to 40mph
 - Penkridge Bank Road near Broadhurst Green (War Cemetery) Reduced to 40mph
 - Stafford Brook Road – reduced to 40mph
 - Bower Ln Rugeley -30mph extended
 - Milford Main Rd – 40mph
 - The Team's Business Plan being considered later on the agenda, includes an action to investigate with SCC highways the feasibility, process, costs and benefits of establishing an area-wide mandatory 40 mph zone across the Chase. Related actions the Team is going to look at this year include options to improve the main road gateways onto the Chase, as well as the safety of intersections between PRow and highways.
- 5.7 DW noted that there will be legal costs involved as well. TW highlighted the entrance to Springslade Lodge being a safety concern that would benefit from speed reduction measures.
- 5.8 **Action: The National Landscape Team to progress through the Business Plan.**
- 5.9 Question 3. Can there be legislation introduced to protect ponds and lakes throughout the Chase from dog walkers that allow their animals to access and swim in these important natural oasis. This addresses externally anti flea/tick treated animals which are literally killing off our dwindling insect populations even further. The public need educating in this regard and it would be especially useful to mention it in official publications and flyers.
- 5.10 IM responded:
- This question is highlighting the insecticides that are used in flea and tick treatments for dogs, that can then enter watercourses and water bodies when dogs swim or enter them. The insecticides are powerful and pose a risk for aquatic wildlife.
 - The presence of these chemicals in water bodies on the Chase has not been researched. Both the New Forest National Park and Norfolk Broads National Parks have highlighted concerns, and it is reasonable to assume that it is also an issue here.
 - Many water bodies lie with designated wildlife sites, such as SSSI and LNR and, in theory, are protected. LNRs probable have by-laws. It is a criminal offence to intentionally or recklessly carry out an activity or operation that damages the site. It is an interesting question whether a dog owner that has their dog off the lead and allows it to entre the water is being reckless?
 - Cannock Chase Council has a Public Spaces Protection Order in place that prohibits dog fouling, dogs on leads, exclusion of dogs (from specified areas, maximum number of dogs). It doesn't cover the National Landscape, but is a tool that could be considered.
 - Many partners are actively promoting responsible dog ownership. More direct, stronger messages are an option.

- 5.11 GS commented that this is about winning hearts and minds of dog owners. It is already a requirement of open access land for dogs to be on leads during certain times of the year. A PSPO for the Chase would be unenforceable. HC – treats her dogs with herbal remedies. The focus for dealing with this issue is education and clear messaging. DS – natural-based treatments should replace the chemicals.
- 5.12 **Action. Partners to raise awareness of the impacts of these chemicals in their education and messaging with dog owners.**
- 5.13 Question 4. The possibility of official nationwide sale restriction of disposable bbq's? With the formal "outlawing" the use of them in public parks and all AONBs. No one is held accountable for the limitless supply of these totally unnecessary time bombs.
- 5.14 IM responded:
- Whilst disposable BBQs offer convenience, they deplete and waste resources, can lead to littering and present fire hazards.
 - Some MPs have spoken out about their use, and in the summer 2023 all major retailers voluntarily stopped selling them.
 - Local landowners do not allow them on the open Chase and raise awareness of the risk of wildfires, and promote the Cannock Chase Code.
 - Some areas have imposed Public Space Protection Orders that ban their use.
- [New Forest Public Spaces Protection Order 2023 \(No 1\)](#)
[Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Public Spaces Protection Order \(Wildfires\) 2025](#)
- 5.15 **Action: Partners continue to reinforce with the public the risks posed by bbqs and other fires.**

6. **Finance report**

- 6.1 JB advised the following:

Final Outturn 2024/25

- The final net revenue spend was £348,640 compared to budget resulting in a total underspend of £41,880. Of this, £10,462.50 will have to be repaid to Defra.

Revenue Budget update 2025/26

- Defra has 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.
- At this early stage, AONB approved projects, Access for All projects and Capital Uplift projects are anticipated to break even against their respective budget allocations.

AONB Reserve

- The balance of the AONB 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. This is an increase on the balance of £84,300 at the end of FY 2014/25.

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

- The current forecast position is a breakeven position.

6.2 TP was pleased to see that the AONB Reserves has a healthy balance. With hindsight it may have been possible to have used the Reserves to balance this year's budget instead of using the salary of the vacant Landscape Planning Officer post.

6.3 **RESOLVED that:**

1. *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. *Progress on the current net revenue budget for 2025/26 and its current forecast outturn position are noted.*
3. *Progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is noted.*

7. National Landscape Annual Review 2024-25

7.1 SH presented to members the latest Annual Review of the achievements of the National Landscape Partnership during 2024-25, structured according to Defra's four themes of Nature, Climate, People and Place. The Review showcases the breadth of work that has gone into delivering our core purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of Cannock Chase.

7.2 LD asked which retail outlets are selling the Walking booklet? SH to send a list.

7.3 DH highlighted the economic value of the hours contributed by volunteers, and drew attention to the [Volunteers Count website](#).

7.4 **RESOLVED:**

That the Annual Review is approved for publication.

8. National Landscape Annual Conference 2025

8.1 SH summarised the evaluation and feedback received from this year's Annual Conference held at Beau Desert Golf Club on Thursday 19th June. 76 people attended on the day.

8.2 Feedback and evaluation can be summarised as follows:

- 90% of respondents rated the event as very good or excellent.
- 90% of respondents rated the booking process as very easy or extremely easy.
- 95% of respondents rated the Year in Review presentations as useful.
- All of the external speakers received positive feedback. The presentation on place attachment was rated the most excellent.
- 75% of respondents enjoyed the participatory art activity.
- The conference facilities were rated 4.6/5.0 and the refreshments 4.4/5.0

8.3 Other feedback can be summarised, as follows:

Ideas for improving conferences

- Provide delegate lists
- Exhibition stands
- Group discussions / more interaction

Themes for future conferences

- Heathland management
- Volunteering
- User's perspectives

Take-away points

- Use social media and more straight talking!
- Focus on children and young people
- Bridge the funding gap (green finance)

Doing something positive

- Think and work more collaboratively
- Raise awareness and importance of the Chase
- Being more inclusive and accessible

8.4 TP commented that the Conference went well, and requested that the suggestions for improvement were brought back to Joint Committee with responses.

8.5 RESOLVED:

That the feedback and evaluation from the Annual Conference is noted.

9. Business Plan 2025-26

9.1 IM presented the forward work programme for the National Landscape Team set out in the Business Plan 2025-26 and described each of the key priorities for each of the AONB Management Plan themes (Nature, Climate, People and Place).

9.2 Members of the Committee expressed their praise and support for the Business Plan. DH asked whether the Plan should support a thriving economy. SB responded that this wasn't part of the National Landscape's statutory remit.

9.3 RESOLVED:

That the Business Plan 2025-26 is approved.

10. AONB Management Plan 2025-2030 – Performance Management

10.1 IM presented proposed new arrangements to enable the National Landscape Partnership to better monitor its performance against the delivery of the AONB Management Plan, comprising:

- Partner contributions – annual requests for partners to provide updates for actions for which they are responsible/contributing
- Performance reporting website
- Annual Report
- Annual Review

10.2 KH expressed concern that this would place an additional burden on the SAC Partnership and needs to be realistic. IM responded that existing updates provided by SAC Officers to SAC Working Group would probably provide sufficient information.

10.3 **RESOLVED:**

That the proposed new arrangements for Performance Management are approved.

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

11.1 The dates and venues of upcoming meetings of the Joint Committee are confirmed as:

- *Monday 8 December 2025, 2-4 pm (Wolseley Centre)*
- *Monday 16 March 2026, 2-4 pm, (Wolseley Centre)*

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 – Revenue Budget Forecast 2025/26 & Draft Revenue Budget 2026/27

Item for: Noting and Decision

Author: John Broad, Senior 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 2025/26 and its current forecast outturn position is noted.
2. That progress on spend of the Capital Uplift and Access for All Fund for 2025/26 is noted.
3. That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme for 2025/26 is noted.
4. That the Joint Committee considers various budgetary scenarios for the setting of the 2026/27 net revenue budget and indicates a preferred option.

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 2025/26 and its current forecast outturn position, as well as spend on the Capital Uplift, Access for All Fund and Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme. It also presents some scenarios for the setting of a 2026/27 revenue budget for the Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership to consider. The recommendations represent an effective way to continue to carry forward the implementation of the Cannock Chase National Landscape AONB Management Plan 2025-2030.

Revenue Budget Update 2025/26

3. The approved budget for 2025/26 presented at the last Joint Committee meeting on 14th July 2025 was £488,920. This included the fourth year of Access for All funding (£115,790) as well as a one-off capital uplift (£151,180).
4. The current forecast outturn position for the Core budget (*Appendix 1*) is a breakeven position based on a small £1,500 overspend on its staffing budget, plus a minor £640 overspend on Office Equipment purchases which are offset by corresponding forecast underspends against Other Core budgets (i.e., Printing & Publicity, Core Activity, the Annual Conference etc) totalling £2,140.

5. 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 £7,300 of the original £10,000 budget remains unallocated.
6. The individual projects, totalling £15,150 for the AONB Projects, £115,790 for the Access for All Fund and £151,180 for the Capital Uplift are set out in *Appendix 3*. Currently £1,267 of the Access For All Fund and £72,594 of the Capital Uplift budgets remain unallocated. A predicted overspend of £2,680 for AONB Projects will be offset by a corresponding underspend forecast for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

7. Since July 2020, the National Landscape has been delivering the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) programme collaborating with farmers and land managers. This FIPL funding is provided by DEFRA and is additional funding on top of the annual core grant that the National Landscape 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 £552,890. The current forecast outturn position when compared to budget is a breakeven position. In the event of there being any underspend on the Programme, this will have to be returned to DEFRA.

Reserve

9. The opening balance on the Cannock Chase AONB Reserve currently stands at £84,300 for 2025/26. 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 the reserve at the end of 2025/26 will be £91,280, after accounting for the proposed transfers in of £980 in sales income; the SDF Administration fee of £1,000 along with a £5,000 Administration fee from the Farming in protected Landscapes budget for National Landscape staff and Finance colleagues time spent administering/monitoring the programme during the current financial year.

2026/27 Cannock Chase National Landscape Net Revenue Budget

13. DEFRA has not yet announced a new funding settlement for England's National Landscapes for 2026/27 and beyond. The Department is having to find significant savings, and National Landscapes are anticipating, at best, a flatline settlement (i.e., a stand-still grant allocation with no cost of living increase) or, at worst, a reduction in the annual grant allocation of up to 9%.
14. Either scenario, or anything in between, will compound the budgetary pressures that Cannock Chase National Landscape has had to manage over the past 3 financial years. The Joint Committee is reminded that the current 2025/26 budget was balanced by freezing the vacant Landscape Planning Officer post to reduce expenditure on salaries. The savings presented in this report for the various budgetary scenarios for the 2026/27 revenue budget are in addition to this.
15. A 9% cut in the annual grant allocation equates to a £15,548 reduction in the DEFRA grant next year. In addition, annual inflationary budget pressures (including staff increments) on next year's budget, totalling £6,695, have been identified.
16. Given this uncertain position, it is therefore not possible to set the 2026/27 revenue budget at this stage. A range of budgetary options to achieve a balanced budget is therefore presented for the Committee's consideration and comment. Options 1-3 have been prepared based on a potential 9% DEFRA grant reduction and the annual inflationary uplift of the budget, Option 4 is based on a stand-still grant allocation, also with the annual inflationary uplift.
17. These four options are set out in *Appendix 6*, and are based on the following:

Option 1 – A 9% reduction in DEFRA grant funding with annual pay inflation & incremental growth balanced by:

- reducing Core Activity expenditure by £3,348 and
- drawing down £18,896 from the AONB Reserve.

Option 2 – A 9% reduction in DEFRA grant funding with annual pay inflation & incremental growth balanced by:

- reducing Core Activity expenditure by £3,348
- reducing AONB Project expenditure by £10,908 and
- drawing down a reduced amount of £7,988 from the AONB Reserve.

Option 3 – A 9% reduction in DEFRA grant funding with annual pay inflation & incremental growth balanced by:

- reducing Core Activity expenditure by £3,348
- reducing AONB Project expenditure by £10,908,
- requesting an additional £4,242 of funding contributions from Cannock Chase AONB partners and
- drawing down a nominal amount of £3,746 from the AONB Reserve.

Option 4 – A ‘flatline’ DEFRA grant settlement (i.e., assumes no % reduction in grant or a stand still grant allocation) with annual pay inflation & incremental growth balanced by:

- reducing Core Activity expenditure by £3,348 and
- drawing down £3,348 from the AONB Reserve.

It should be noted, that the current AONB Reserve has been built up over several years and currently stands at £92,180. All the options presented will result in a diminishing balance.

Equalities Implications

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

Legal Implications

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

Resource and Value for Money Implications

20. 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

21. 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

22. The following recommendations are made to the Joint Committee:
 1. That progress on the current net revenue budget for 2025/26 and its current forecast outturn position is noted.
 2. That progress on spend of the Capital Uplift and Access for All Fund for 2025/26 is noted.
 3. That progress on spend for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme for 2025/26 is noted.
 4. That the Joint Committee considers various budgetary scenarios for the setting of the 2026/27 net revenue budget and indicates a preferred option.

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Cannock Chase AONB Core & Project Costs

Budget Update for 2025/26

	Budget	2025 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Core Budget				
Salaries	169,150	99,354	170,320	1,170
Training Expenses	1,510	335	1,510	0
Travel and Subsistence	700	673	1,030	330
Staff and Associated Costs	171,360	100,363	172,860	1,500
Office Equipment	1,400	1,517	2,040	640
Volunteer Costs	500	107	500	0
National Liaison	3,160	2,691	2,691	-469
Print & Publicity	4,140	4,411	3,985	-155
Annual Conference	2,000	1,429	1,429	-571
Core Activity (including monitoring, community involvement, etc)	5,240	0	4,295	-945
Partnership Running Costs	9,000	0	9,000	0
Core Budget Subtotal	196,800	110,518	196,800	0
Revenue Projects:				
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	1,700	4,000	-6,000
AONB Projects	15,150	3,000	17,830	2,680
Revenue Projects Subtotal	25,150	4,700	21,830	-3,320
Capital Projects:				
Access for All Projects	115,790	8,527	114,523	-1,267
Capital Uplift Projects	151,180	0	78,586	-72,594
Capital Projects Subtotal	266,970	8,527	193,109	-73,861
Total Budget/Initial Forecast Outturn	488,920	123,746	411,739	-77,181
Funded By:				
DEFRA Grant				
Core	-147,600	-124,297	-147,600	0
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	-7,500	-4,000	6,000
AONB Projects	-15,150	-11,363	-17,830	-2,680
DEFRA Revenue Grant Subtotal	-172,750	-143,160	-169,430	3,320
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	-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	-44,280	-49,200	0
Total Revenue Funding	-221,950	-187,440	-218,630	3,320
DEFRA Capital Grant				
Access for All Projects	-115,790	-86,840	-114,523	1,267
Capital Uplift Projects	-151,180	-113,382	-78,586	72,594
DEFRA Capital Grant Subtotal	-266,970	-200,222	-193,109	73,861
Funding from(+)/to reserve(-)	0	0	0	0
Total Funding	-488,920	-387,662	-411,739	77,181

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

Sustainable Development Fund

Budget Update for 2025/26

	Budget	2025 Actuals	Predicted Outturn	Variation
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects				
Friends Of Hednesford Park & Cannock Mental Health Hub	500	500	500	0
Cannock Chase County Park Bat & Bird Box	1,200	1,200	1,200	0
TBC	7,300	0	1,300	-6,000
Approved Projects Total	9,000	1,700	3,000	-6,000
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	1,700	4,000	-6,000

Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee

AONB Projects, Access For All and Capital Uplift

Budget Update for 2025/26

	Budget	2025	Predicted	Variation
	£	Actuals	Outturn	£
	£	£	£	£
Approved Projects:				
AONB Projects:				
White-clawed crayfish survey traps	830	0	830	0
Red Wood Ant feasibility study	2,000	0	2,000	0
Research & development for place attachment project with young people.	3,000	3,000	3,000	0
Fixed Point Photography 20 year report	9,320	0	12,000	2,680
AONB Approved Projects Total	15,150	3,000	17,830	2,680
Access for All Projects:				
Upgrade pedestrian bridge (Wolseley Centre, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust)	9,000	8,527	9,000	0
Upgrade steps (Milford Common)	12,880	0	12,880	0
Nest box cameras / wall map (Cannock Chase Country Park)	1,000	0	1,000	0
Installation of interpretation panels X4 (Hednesford Hills), X1 Hazelslade LNR	14,500	0	14,500	0
Installation of X5 interpretation panels (Beaudesert Hall)	12,500	0	12,500	0
Upgrade car park entrance signs (Cannock Chase Country Park)	10,000	0	10,000	0
National Landscape road gateway markers design strategy and options	18,840	0	18,840	0
Surface enhancements (Too-H trail)	2,248	0	2,248	0
Accessible demonstration beds, Arcadia Forest Garden	7,055	0	7,055	0
Signage and interpretation, Arcadia, Forest Garden	5,000	0	5,000	0
Viewing bench in Forest Garden (Shugborough Estate)	6,500	0	6,500	0
Creation of upgraded and more accessible National Landscape website	13,500	0	13,500	0
New military history leaflet	1,500	0	1,500	0
Balance	1,267	0	0	-1,267
Access For All Approved Projects Total	115,790	8,527	114,523	-1,267
Capital Uplift Projects:				
Surface enhancements (RAF Hednesford Trail)	12,730	0	12,730	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)	664	0	664	0
Heathland creation, RAF Hednesford, Cannock Chase Country Park	6,870	0	6,870	0
Heathland creation, Stile Cop SBI	10,000	0	10,000	0
Heathland creation for adders, New Hayes tip SBI	5,000	0	5,000	0
Climate action weather technology, Arcadia, Forest Garden	3,822	0	3,822	0
Trial installation of Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) pods	15,000	0	15,000	0
Trial Eco Churches project	20,000	0	20,000	0
Website hosting and maintenance for 3 yrs	4,500	0	4,500	0
Balance	72,594	0	0	-72,594
Capital Uplift Projects	151,180	0	78,586	-72,594
TOTAL	282,120	11,527	210,939	-71,181

Appendix 4

Farming in Protected Landscapes Grant

Budget Update for 2025/26

	Budget £	2025 Actuals £	Predicted Outturn £	Variation £
Farming in Protected Landscapes Expenditure:				
Programme Advice & Guidance	65,625	59,690	100,847	35,222
Programme Administration	41,545	4,418	6,323	-35,222
Admin Fee	5,000	0	5,000	0
Project Spend	440,720	0	440,720	0
Total	552,890	64,108	552,890	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	-2,383	-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	980				6,000		6,000			91,280
		19,089	7,673	27,409	0	55,900	-33,502	22,398	10,789	-6,292	91,280

Appendix 6 - Cannock Chase AONB 2026-27 Revenue Budget Setting Options

Option 1 - 9% reduction DEFRA Grant Funding with Pay Inflation and Incremental Growth

	Budget £	Proposed Adjustment
Core Budget		
Salaries	175,845	
Running Costs	24,303	Reduce Core Activity Expenditure £3,348
Core Budget Subtotal	200,148	
Revenue Projects:		
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	
AONB Projects	15,150	
Revenue Projects Subtotal	25,150	
Total Core Expenditure	225,298	
Funded By:		
DEFRA Grant		
Core	-132,052	
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	
AONB Projects	-15,150	
DEFRA Revenue Grant Subtotal	-157,202	
Local Authority Contributions		
Lichfield District Council	-2,460	
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,460	
Cannock Chase District Council	-9,840	
Stafford Borough Council	-9,840	
Staffordshire County Council	-24,600	
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-49,200	
Total Core Funding	-206,402	
AONB Reserve	-18,896	Draw on AONB Reserve £18,896
Total Core Income	-225,298	

Option 2 - 9% reduction DEFRA Grant Funding with Pay Inflation and Incremental Growth

	Budget £	Proposed Adjustment
Core Budget		
Salaries	175,845	
Running Costs	24,303	Reduce Core Activity Expenditure £3,348
Core Budget Subtotal	200,148	
Revenue Projects:		
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	
AONB Projects	4,242	Reduce AONB Projects Expenditure £10,908
Revenue Projects Subtotal	14,242	
Total Core Expenditure	214,390	
Funded By:		
DEFRA Grant		
Core	-132,052	
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	
AONB Projects	-15,150	
DEFRA Revenue Grant Subtotal	-157,202	
Local Authority Contributions		
Lichfield District Council	-2,460	
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,460	
Cannock Chase District Council	-9,840	
Stafford Borough Council	-9,840	
Staffordshire County Council	-24,600	
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-49,200	
Total Core Funding	-206,402	
AONB Reserve	-7,988	*Draw on AONB Reserve £7,988
Total Core Income	-214,390	

Option 3 - 9% reduction DEFRA Grant Funding with Pay Inflation and Incremental Growth

	Budget £	Proposed Adjustment
Core Budget		
Salaries	175,845	
Running Costs	24,303	Reduce Core Activity Expenditure £3,348
Core Budget Subtotal	200,148	
Revenue Projects:		
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	
AONB Projects	4,242	Reduce AONB Projects Expenditure £10,908
Revenue Projects Subtotal	14,242	
Total Core Expenditure	214,390	
Funded By:		
DEFRA Grant		
Core	-132,052	
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	
AONB Projects	-15,150	
DEFRA Revenue Grant Subtotal	-157,202	
Local Authority Contributions		<u>Additional LA Contributions £4,242</u>
Lichfield District Council	-2,672	Request Additional District Contributions £212
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,672	Request Additional District Contributions £212
Cannock Chase District Council	-10,688	Request Additional District Contributions £848
Stafford Borough Council	-10,688	Request Additional District Contributions £848
Staffordshire County Council	-26,721	Additional SCC Funding £2,121
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-53,442	
Total Core Funding	-210,644	
AONB Reserve	-3,746	*Draw on AONB Reserve £3,746
Total Core Income	-214,390	

Option 4 - A flatline DEFRA Settlement with Pay Inflation and Incremental Growth

	Budget	Proposed Adjustment
	£	
Core Budget		
Salaries	175,845	
Running Costs	24,303	Reduce Core Activity Expenditure £3,348
Core Budget Subtotal	200,148	
Revenue Projects:		
Sustainable Development Fund	10,000	
AONB Projects	15,150	
Revenue Projects Subtotal	25,150	
Total Core Expenditure	225,298	
Funded By:		
DEFRA Grant		
Core	-147,600	
Sustainable Development Fund	-10,000	
AONB Projects	-15,150	
DEFRA Revenue Grant Subtotal	-172,750	
Local Authority Contributions		
Lichfield District Council	-2,460	
South Staffordshire District Council	-2,460	
Cannock Chase District Council	-9,840	
Stafford Borough Council	-9,840	
Staffordshire County Council	-24,600	
Local Authority Contributions Subtotal	-49,200	
Total Core Funding	-221,950	Remains the same as 2025/26
AONB Reserve	-3,348	Draw on AONB Reserve £3,348
Total Core Income	-225,298	

Status of the Strategy

5. The Strategy supports and expands on the policies and actions contained in the Cannock Chase National Landscape AONB Management Plan 2025-2030. As such, it should be viewed with the same importance as the Plan and treated as a material consideration when making any decisions or taking any actions affecting the National Landscape.
6. By supporting this Strategy, local authorities, government agencies, statutory undertakers and other relevant authorities with an influence on the historic environment will fulfil their obligations under S245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to '*seek to further*' the statutory purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape (AONB).
7. This Strategy does not change existing legislative safeguards for the historic environment.

Structure of the Strategy

8. The Strategy's vision is for the historic environment *to be in the best possible condition, managed sustainably with the support and active involvement of landowners, managers, local communities and visitors. It will be valued by all who live, work in and visit the area: accessible, inclusive, alive and inspiring.*
9. Underpinning this vision are six guiding principles to steer the delivery of the strategy and its actions and projects.
 1. *The historic environment is fundamental to the character, sense of place and natural beauty of Cannock Chase.*
 2. *Cannock Chase is a lived-in, dynamic working landscape in an environment that is changing; further change is inevitable, and the historic environment will need to be effectively and sensitively managed in ways that will best sustain heritage values whilst recognising opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance.*
 3. *The historic environment is an essential component of people's surroundings and a shared resource; its inclusive access and enjoyment are integral to its protection and future.*
 4. *Access, interpretation and conservation efforts will be mindful of the four thematic story strands that have been developed for the Chase.*
 5. *Research, survey and insight underpin all access, interpretation and conservation actions.*
 6. *More will be achieved by working together and pooling efforts and resources to further the understanding, enjoyment and conservation of the historic environment of Cannock Chase.*
10. The Strategy highlights the importance of Cannock Chase for the historic environment and the social, environmental and economic benefits it brings. The challenges facing the historic environment are then summarised, along with who is responsible for its protection.

11. To build a sustainable future for the historic environment of Cannock Chase, the Strategy sets out a framework of objectives, key actions and associated projects around the three core aims of UNDERSTANDING, ENJOYING and CARING.
12. Running through the strategy are four story strands that will help visitors, local communities, stakeholders and land managers to better understand and engage with this complex landscape:
 1. The Thrill of the Chase
 2. Home is where the Heath is
 3. Making a living
 4. The Chase at War
13. Appended to the Strategy is an ambitious portfolio of projects collated from and inspired by the legacy of previous initiatives as well as more recent ideas put forward in consultation with stakeholders.

Implementation

14. The National Landscape Team will take the lead on driving forward the strategy. However, the Strategy's actions and projects are for the entire National Landscape Partnership to implement collaboratively, pooling the combined resources, expertise and experience of the partners, and building on their established networks of landowners and managers, volunteers and local communities.
15. Much can be achieved through this collaborative approach and by utilising existing resources. Additional funding will be needed, however, to deliver some of the proposed projects. These could be delivered as individual projects or grouped together as part of a larger funding bid. This Strategy will help in providing the direction and framework for attracting new resources, demonstrating how investment in the historic environment will bring wide-ranging benefits to the Chase and its local communities.
16. The Historic Environment Task and Finish Group supports the National Landscape Partnership to deliver the aims of the AONB Management Plan, as mandated in the Partnership Agreement 2016. It is proposed that the Group will meet on an annual basis to review progress of the Strategy's project portfolio, determine the priorities for the year ahead and attribute leadership.
17. Progress against the Strategy will be tracked against a suite of indicators for the three core aims and reported to the Joint Committee as part of new arrangements for annual performance monitoring and reporting (agreed by Joint Committee at its July 2025 meeting).

Consultation

18. For a 6 week period between December 2025 and January 2026, feedback will be invited on the Draft Historic Environment Strategy via an online questionnaire. The draft consultation will be promoted to partners, local authorities, the historic environment sector and local communities directly; through a media release; as well as being circulated to all subscribers to the National Landscape enewsletter.
19. A report will be produced outlining the responses received from the public consultation and how these have been addressed. A revised, final Strategy will be presented for approval and adoption at the National Landscape Joint Committee meeting on 16th March 2026.

Recommendations

20. The Committee is requested to consider the Historic Environment Strategy Consultation Draft and approve its issue for consultation, with any amendments determined at the meeting.

Appendices (issued separately)

1. Chase past, present and future. An Historic Environment Strategy for Cannock Chase National Landscape.

Item 7 Guide for highways improvement and management

Item for: Decision

Author: Ian Marshall, Team Leader

Financial implications: Funding is in place for production and publication of the Guide.

The principles and recommendations will inform and support the delivery of existing Highway programmes and National Landscape activities. Implementation of individual improvements will depend on capacity and available budget.

Recommendations: The Committee is requested to approve the Guide for adoption, with any amendments determined at the meeting.

Background

1. This Guide updates the Cannock Chase AONB Highway Design Guide 2005. Strengthened responsibilities towards National Landscapes, changing design standards and approaches and enhanced environmental safeguards mean that it is timely to review the document to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.
2. The highways of Cannock Chase National Landscape (AONB) are an integral part of this nationally protected area. The area's roads and lanes contribute to the character of the landscape in their own right while also forming part of a network that walkers, cyclists and horse riders use and enjoy. Highways and highways infrastructure can, however, suburbanise and standardise the landscape. Road traffic also impacts negatively on the natural beauty of the area and affects environmental quality.
3. Most visitors arrive at the National Landscape by car, and the road network is their first point of contact with the area and creates their first impressions. Across the National Landscape, highways also provide a vantage point from which local people, visitors to the area, and those passing through can appreciate the landscape.
4. The Guide aims to ensure that the environmental impacts of highways, and the ways in which they are managed, are as sympathetic as possible to the natural beauty of the National Landscape. Key to this is the desire to retain the special character of the area while ensuring that highways provide a convenient and safe network for travellers.
5. This guidance has been produced for staff working in Staffordshire Highway Authority, statutory undertakers and other organisations with responsibility for the road network and highways asset management within the National Landscape. It has been developed with the input of staff in the Highway Authority.

Status of the Guide

6. The Guide supports and expands on the policies and actions contained in the Cannock Chase National Landscape AONB Management Plan 2025-2030. As such, it should be viewed with the same importance as the Plan and treated as a material consideration when making any decisions or taking any actions affecting the National Landscape.

7. By following this Guide the Highways Authority, statutory undertakers and other relevant authorities with an influence on highways will fulfil their obligations under S245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to '*seek to further*' the statutory purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape (AONB).
8. This Guide doesn't not change the highways safety, technical or environmental standards that exist.

Structure of the Guide

9. The first part of the Guide provides background and context. It describes the types of roads within the National Landscape; responsibilities; status of the Guide; environmental considerations; deer and deer collisions; the landscape character/character of the road network and; the importance of sense of place.
10. This is followed by 6 Guiding Principles that should be followed when considering highways design, planned maintenance and improvements. Each is supported by detailed recommendations that will help to reinforce the sense of place within the National Landscape and enhance the visitor experience.

Principle 1. Manage the character of the National Landscape and local distinctiveness

Principle 2 Enhance network entrances

Principle 3. Manage motor vehicle movement within the National Landscape

Principle 4. Reduce visual clutter from signage.

Principle 5. Reconsider the approach to road safety on minor roads.

Principle 6. Promote opportunities for sustainable travel.

11. The Guide proposes a number of specific improvements that could be developed by the National Landscape and the Highway Authority working together, along with other partners, capacity and funding permitting.

Implementation

12. The Guide will be circulated to relevant Heads of Business Units within the County Council, Area Highway Teams, statutory undertakers as well as district and town and parish councils, so that it can inform and support highway programmes for planned maintenance and improvements (Highway Maintenance, Integrated Transport Programme, Divisional Highway Programme, Structural Maintenance Programme).
13. A new National Landscape Webmap has been produced for internal use within the County Council, and is available as a first point of call for environmental information about the National Landscape when planning highway works.
14. The National Landscape Team is already taking forward some of the proposed improvement activities, for example, preparing a strategy and design options for

updated road gateway signage into the National Landscape. Others will be progressed as and when opportunities arise and there is available capacity and budget.

15. Progress against the Guide will be monitored and reported to the Joint Committee as part of new arrangements for annual performance monitoring and reporting (agreed by Joint Committee at its July 2025 meeting).

Recommendations

16. The Committee is requested to approve the Guide for adoption, with any amendments determined at the meeting.

Appendices (issued separately)

17. Guide for highways improvement and management.

Item 8	National Landscape Association Chair's Conference 2025
Item for:	Information
Author:	Verbal report from the Chair
Financial implications:	Attendance at the Annual Conference is funded through the National Landscape budget.
Recommendations:	The Committee notes the feedback, and is invited to ask questions.

Item 9	Local Government Re-organisation on Staffordshire
Item for:	Information
Author:	Verbal report by Ian Marshall, Team Leader
Financial implications:	None
Recommendations:	The Committee notes the update, and is invited to ask questions.

Item 10 Strategic priorities for 2025-2026

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 support of partner organisations

Recommendations: That members note progress achieved against the strategic priorities set out in this year's Business Plan, and are invited to make comment.

Background

1. Our Business Plan for 2025-2026 was approved by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 14 July 2025. It shows how the Cannock Chase National Landscape Team will deliver our part of the [AONB Management Plan 2025-2030](#) and respond proactively to the challenges and opportunities affecting the National Landscape.
2. This report summarises the activities taken to date to deliver the 14 strategic priorities identified in the Plan. Progress against all 44 actions contained in the Plan will be reported in March 2026.

Overall progress against strategic priorities

3. Overall, progress against strategic priorities is a mixed picture. Whilst half of the actions are on track, our ability to deliver some activities has been impacted by a combination of limitations Defra has set on how we can spend this year's capital uplift (specifically, what counts as capital expenditure), as well as the capacity of the Team and some partners. We are having to deliver more activities ourselves, which will mean they will take longer to achieve; whilst others are going to be put on hold and re-visited at a later date.
4. Action numbers refer to the action numbers included in the AONB Management Plan. Progress against action is assessed using a RAG reporting system:

 = activity ON TRACK

 = activity PROGRESSING, BUT WITH SOME ISSUES

 = activity OFF TRACK

Strategic priority	Progress to date	Prospect of completion by FY end
Researched the potential sites for 30by30 target (Action No. 1)		
Researched 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)		
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)		
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),		
Other accessibility improvements through the Access for All Fund (multiple actions)		
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)		

Progress against individual priorities

5. Progress against individual priorities since 1 April 2025 is described below.

Outcomes for Nature



Researched the potential sites for 30by30 target (Action No. 1)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- We have investigated the evidence that will be required to assess whether or not land meets Defra's published criteria for 30by30, and have run this past the National Landscapes Association for comment.
- We have updated partner landowners that this exercise is underway and that the next step will be to arrange 1:1 meetings with them to assess whether their land could count towards 30by30 and if not, what steps will need to be taken to meet the criteria.

 Researched the feasibility of a super National Nature Reserve (Action No. 9)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- No progress has been possible against Action No. 9 – the feasibility of establishing a super NNR within the National Landscape. We had planned to appoint consultants to progress this action, but this is ineligible as capital expenditure. The action is therefore on hold and will be re-visited at a later date.

 Prepared species action plans for 5 Champion species (Action No. 4)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- We have met with partners and identified a lead organisation for each species:
 - Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly – Greg Williamson, National Trust
 - Adder – Cathy Taylor, Staffordshire County Council
 - Nightjar – West Midland Ringing Group are looking into whether they would be prepared to be lead for this species.
 - Solitary wasp species of bare ground – Jeff Sim, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
 - White-clawed crayfish – Jeff Sim, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
- We have agreed a template for the Species Action Plans, based on that used by the Mendip Hills National Landscape for their Champion species.
- Potentially a further species could be added to the list of Champion species - Red Wood Ant *Formica rufa*. This invertebrate is considered rare and threatened. A small colony survives on Cannock Chase (circa 4 nests), but is vulnerable due to its proximity to a mountain bike track. The National Landscape is supporting a project to protect the population through habitat manipulation where they currently reside (Moors Gorse) and to look at opportunities to translocate some of the nests to other, safer and more viable areas.

 Published the Deer Management Strategy and agreed implementation plans (Action No. 6)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- A Deer Management Strategy has been drafted and circulated to partner organisations for endorsement. We aim to bring the Strategy for approval to Joint Committee in March next year.

Outcomes for Climate

 Mapped the extent and depth of peatlands, and carried out field surveys and paleoenvironmental analysis (Action No. 18)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- We are in the process of commissioning specialist consultants to undertake a field survey to confirm the presence, extent of peat deposits, their depth, thickness, and nature within the River Sow Floodplain in the north of the National Landscape as

well as palaeoenvironmental/palaeoecological analysis from two core samples on the Chase to help us understand landscape change and use over recent millennia.

 Assessed the potential, opportunities and costs for increasing carbon sequestration and capture through land use change (Action nos. 17, 18 and 45)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- We had planned to appoint consultants to deliver this action, but this is ineligible as capital expenditure. The action is therefore on hold and will be re-visited at a later date.
- The findings from the survey of peatlands in the River Sow Floodplain (see Action No. 18) will be used to prevent further loss of peatland habitats and restore more peatland landscapes to their natural state, thereby contributing to reducing carbon emissions by sequestering and storing more carbon and improving their resilience in the face of climate change.

Outcomes for People

 Published a Recreation Management Strategy (Action No. 22)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- We had planned to appoint consultants to deliver this action, but this is ineligible as capital expenditure and so we are now progressing this internally with the support of partners.
- We have researched examples of recreation management strategies prepared for other protected landscapes in the UK and mainland Europe to identify best practice.
- We have collated evidence and insight around visitor use, behaviours, visitor infrastructure and facilities on the Chase.
- We have met with key landowners and other partners and agreed a framework for the Strategy, and a process and timeline to deliver it by the end of 2026.

 Assessed the condition of all PRow in the National Landscape, and prepared a cost programme of investment (Action Nos. 29 and 30)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- We had planned to appoint consultants to deliver this action, but this is ineligible as capital expenditure. The action is therefore on hold and will be re-visited at a later date.

 Researched road and welcome signage and prepared costed options for investment (Action No. 33)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- We have appointed consultants to prepare a strategy, design options and costings for new road gateway markers on Cannock Chase – reporting by 31 March 2026.



Launched the Cannock Chase Charitable Fund (Action No. 40)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- A Memorandum of Understanding between Staffordshire County Council and the Staffordshire and Shropshire Community Foundation has been drafted. This action is on hold pending confirmation of approval by both parties.



Developed pedestrian gateways for the Staffordshire Way (Action No. 33)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- This action has not progressed and is on hold pending the availability of key partner support.



Other accessibility improvements through the Access for All Fund (multiple actions)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- The Access for All Fund is supporting a wide range of projects that will deliver physical and virtual accessibility improvements on the Chase:
 - Wolsley Centre, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust - upgraded pedestrian bridge
 - Milford Common – upgraded steps
 - Cannock Chase Visitor Centre, Marquis Drive - installation of nest box cameras, TV monitor and wall map
 - Hednesford Hills LNR - artwork and design, manufacture and installation of 4 combination interpretation panels/noticeboards
 - Hazelslade LNR - artwork and design, manufacture and installation of 1 combination interpretation panel/noticeboard
 - Beaudesert Hall - artwork and design, manufacture and installation of 9 interpretation panels for a self-guided history walk
 - Brindley Heath - surface enhancements to complete the Toc-H accessible trail
 - The Arcadia Forest Garden, Shugborough - supply and construction of 6 themed, accessible demonstration planters; the provision of orientation signage to enable access and interpretation; the provision of a viewing bench for reflection and contemplation.
 - Upgrading entrance signs at 10 car parks on the Chase to improve the visitor welcome
 - The preparation of a strategy and design options for National Landscape road gateway markers
 - The design and artwork and printing of a new leaflet telling the story of the military history of Cannock Chase
 - A refreshed and more accessible website for the National Landscape for visitors, residents, stakeholders and partners

Outcomes for Place



Published an updated Guide for highways improvement and management (Action No. 49)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- A Strategy has been drafted with the support of Staffordshire Highway Authority, and is being presented to the Joint Committee for comment and approval.



Developed an expression of interest and full application for a powerline undergrounding scheme at Haywood Park Farm (Action No. 50)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- We have developed an expression of interest with the National Trust for a powerline undergrounding scheme at Haywood Park Farm that could remove c.1,727 metres of 11kV cable and 18 wooden poles for the consideration of the Western Power West Midlands panel at its next meeting in January 2026.
- We are also developing two further expressions of interest. The first involves removing 960 metres of 11kV cables and 15 poles on Forestry England land between Springslade Lodge heading westwards towards the A34. The second involves removing 540 metres of 11kV cables and 5 poles at Gentleshaw Common and adjoining farmland with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and a private landowner.



Published an Historic Environment Strategy (Action No. 60)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- A Strategy has been drafted with the support of the County Archaeologist and peer review of key partners and the National Landscape Historic Environment Task and Finish Group, and is being presented to the Joint Committee for comment and approval to issue for public consultation.



Delivered environmental outcomes through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (multiple actions for Nature, Climate, People and Place)

Key activities since 1 April 2025

- We have approved 14 applications and awarded farmers and landowners grants totalling £345,924 for delivering environmental improvements.
- Our grants are supporting the delivery of a range of benefits for nature, climate, people and place):
 - **Woodlands** - commissioned woodland management for conservation, including veteranisation work and selective felling
 - **Hedgerows** - 2508 metres planted, 468 metres gapping-up, 308 metres coppiced, 145 metres traditionally layed
 - **Trees** - planted 78 hedgerow trees, 337 trees to form small copses, and 87 orchard/fruit trees

- **Grasslands** - planted 6,200 wildflower plugs and 4 wildflower sowing schemes
- **Wetlands** - Restored 5 wetlands and 600 metres of river
- **Heathlands** - restored 3.88 hectares, planted 5,000 Sphagnum plugs, created 30 bare earth scrapes for priority species, supported investment in equipment for long-term heathland restoration as well as fire prevention
- **Wildlife** - installed 93 bird and bat boxes, created 8 reptile and amphibian hibernacula, supported investments in priority species monitoring equipment for long-term research in collaboration with two University departments
- **Heritage assets** - supported the restoration of 1 heritage asset (gates to walled garden)
- **Access** - installed 3 interpretation panels, 4 waymarkers and 3 accessible route maps and information signs, and the development of a 1km accessible walking route on a SSSI
- **Farm businesses** - Supported investments in livestock health and welfare equipment, housing and water troughs to aid land management and promote mixed-species rotational grazing for heritage and rare breeds
- **Rural skills and husbandry** – supported training schemes for local traditional hedgelaying and horse husbandry and sustainable land use management.
- **Surveys** - commissioned small scale peat survey, bird survey, bat survey, wetland feasibility, and drone surveys to aid understanding of landform including and historic environment
- **Environmental education** – Supported learners with special educational needs, two family ‘Discovery Days’ and a ‘BioBlitz’ to aid species identification and reporting at a local SSSI, and two dedicated website pages to improve educational information for two protected sites
- **Achieved ‘added value’** through catalysing landowner actions (eg, landowners removing and recycling wire/barbed wire, and volunteer involvement
- We have compiled the 2024/25 project Headline Data report, reported monthly progress to Defra, and completed an additional requirement to report outputs for the areas of Wildlife-Rich Habitats created/restored outside of protected sites for projects between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2025

Recommendations

6. That members note progress achieved against the strategic priorities set out in this year’s Business Plan, and are invited to ask questions.

Item 11**National Heathland Conference 2026****Item for:**

Information

Author:

Verbal report by Richard Harris, Land Management Officer

Financial implications:

None

Recommendations:

The Committee notes the update on preparations for the conference and is invited to ask questions.

Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Chairman to move:

"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"

Part Two

(All reports in this section are exempt)