

Cannock Chase

National Landscape

an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Annual Review 2025-2026



Cannock
Chase
National
Landscape

Welcome from our Chair



Reflecting on the past twelve months, I am extremely proud of what the National Landscape Team, partners and volunteers have achieved during another challenging year and an increasingly uncertain world order. Working together and sharing our expertise, ideas and resources makes us stronger and more resilient.

Our five-year **AONB Management Plan** guides and underpins all that we do. This year we have tried to improve our performance reporting and have asked partners to tell us what they have delivered against the actions in the Plan. Our Annual Review for 2025-2026 therefore captures more of what the National Landscape Partnership as a whole has delivered. The scale and scope of what we do is truly impressive, and

I'm sure that there is much more that remains unsaid! Our partners are too numerous to mention, but my thanks go to all those who work with us for the benefit of the Chase and its communities and visitors.

It is encouraging that a number of new partnerships have been established during the year. For example, with the Diocese of Lichfield on their eco-churches project, with the County Council's Flood Risk Management Team and rolling out their programme to install Sustainable Urban Drainage pods, and with Cannock Chase Council's Community Officers supporting their work to engage more children with our Future Guardians programme. As always, I'm also pleased to read about the numerous volunteers who help in so many ways and are great ambassadors for the National Landscape.

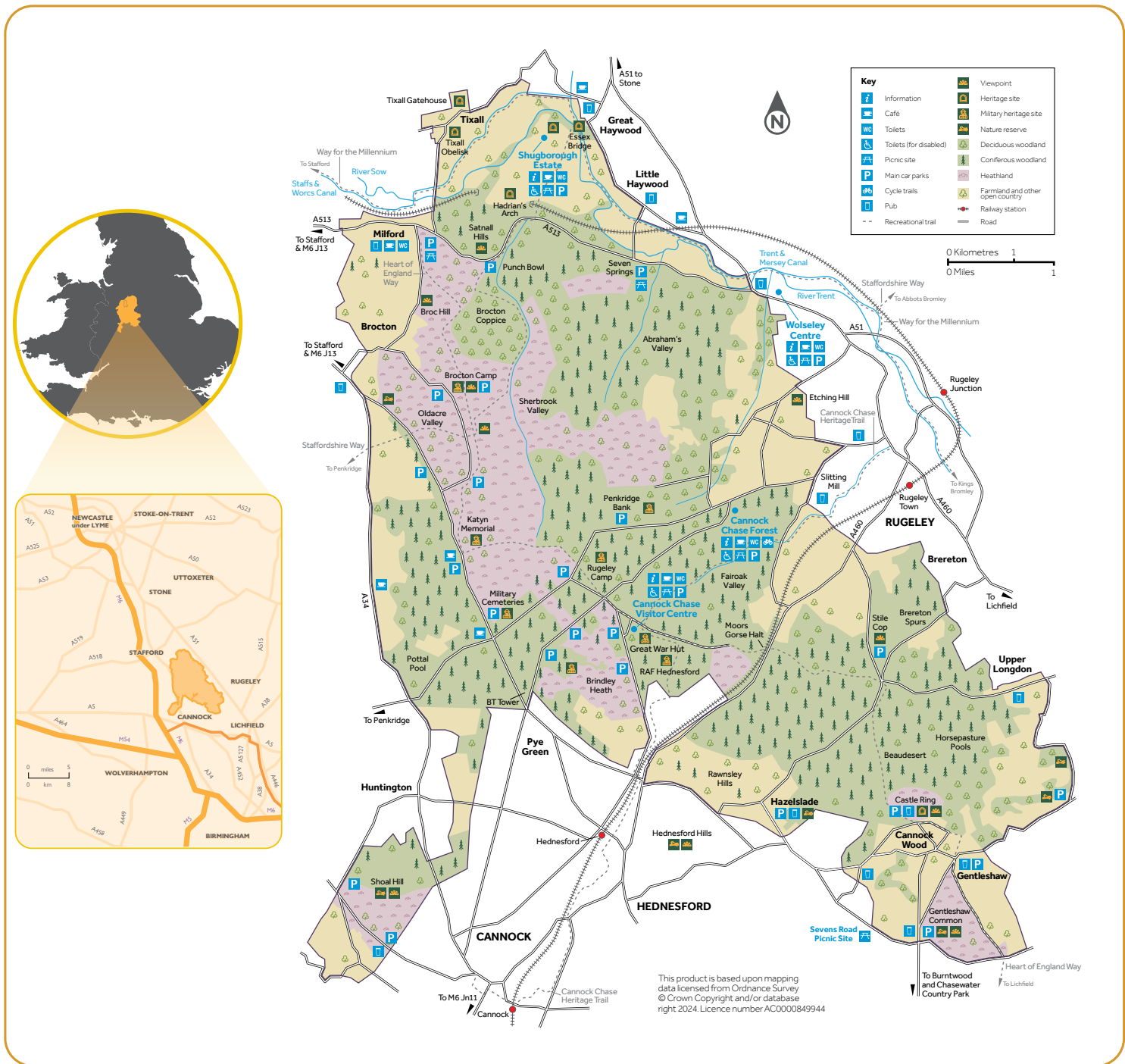
Finally, I am grateful for the continued support of our funding local authorities and our principal sponsors at Defra. Our grant allocations for core capital and Access for All funding have enabled us to deliver against Defra's targets for reversing declines in nature, climate adaptation, and greater inclusion. The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FiPL) has continued to support farmers and land managers to deliver for the environment and help improve the resilience of farm businesses, and I'm delighted that the Government has announced a three-year extension until March 2029.

Together we are making a lasting difference while delivering excellent value for money.

Councillor Tony Pearce

Chair of the Cannock Chase National Landscape Joint Committee

Front cover image: Walkers visiting Cannock Chase



Map. Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Cannock Chase

Cannock Chase National Landscape is situated in Staffordshire in the West Midlands within easy access of several large towns and cities.

Wild and Beautiful

Designated in 1958 and covering 26 sq miles (69 sq kms) of forests, heaths and historic parklands, Cannock Chase is mainland England's smallest National Landscape.

Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership

The National Landscape Partnership comprises all those bodies and individuals that collaborate to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of Cannock Chase. More information on the Partnership is available at:

www.cannock-chase.co.uk

At a glance. What Cannock Chase provides for us

Our infographic captures some of the benefits that Cannock Chase provides for us all – environmentally, socially and economically.

Cannock Chase National Landscape at a glance

Heathland is internationally important for wildlife.

Cannock Chase has the **LARGEST** area surviving in the Midlands



8,700 people live in the National Landscape



2 million people live within 30 kms



63% is forest and heath

24% is farmland



2.5 million visitors each year

The highest density of visitor footfall of any UK Protected Landscape



Industrial history

of mining, charcoal and glass and iron making



31% is protected for biodiversity

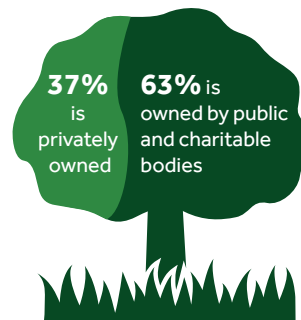
5 Local Authorities



5 sites of importance for geodiversity

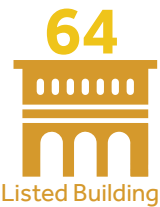


Over 1,000 cultural heritage assets including one of the largest Great War training camps in England



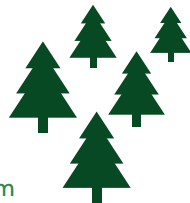
37% is privately owned 63% is owned by public and charitable bodies

15 Town and Parish Councils



64 Listed Buildings

19,000 tonnes of timber harvested annually from Cannock Chase Forest



1.34 million tonnes of carbon is stored in Cannock Chase's habitats

Visitors spend around £47 million annually in the local economy



Provides 2,300 million litres of water each day for public use



Provides 2,300 million litres of water each day for public use



5 Conservation Areas



157 kms of public rights of way including sections of Heart of England Way, Staffordshire Way and Way for the Millennium

51% is publicly accessible land



Provides 820,000 tonnes of sand and gravel extracted annually

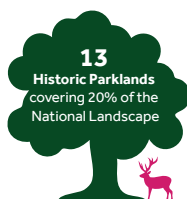
10% of the West Midlands output



1,000-year old hunting landscape



2 Registered Parks and Gardens



13 Historic Parklands covering 20% of the National Landscape



820,000 tonnes of sand and gravel extracted annually

10% of the West Midlands output



7 Scheduled Monuments

Mainland England's smallest National Landscape

at just 26 sq miles 69 sq kms

2 Registered Parks and Gardens



Protecting 30% of nature by 2030 (30by30)

The National Landscape Team has been working with a range of landowner partners to help improve the ecological condition of their nature sites so that they can count towards the Government's 30by30 target. This has included **funding the purchase of equipment** such as a bracken roller and quad bike, flails, mowers, chainsaws and hand tools to manage habitats on Staffordshire Wildlife Trust nature reserves, Cannock Chase Council countryside sites, Cannock Chase Country Park, and the National Trust's Haywood Park Farm. The purchases make the management of these sites more sustainable and cost-effective and are a great help for staff and volunteers.

Cattle play a crucial role in helping to maintain the heathland, wood-pasture and species-rich grassland on the Chase. This year saw Staffordshire Wildlife Trust returning **cattle grazing** to the heathland corridor connecting the Sherbrook Valley with Brindley Heath, on land leased from Forestry England.

Elsewhere, visitors can see cattle grazing on the National Trust land on the Shugborough Estate parkland and Sherbrook valley wood-pasture, on Cemex heathland adjoining Rugeley Quarry, at the Moors Gorse grazing trial area in Cannock Chase Country Park, at Cannock Chase Council's Hazelslade Local Nature Reserve (where livestock fencing has been completely renewed) and Hednesford Hills Local Nature Reserve. Most of the cattle are hardy native breeds best suited to coping with the tough vegetation and preventing scrub encroachment. Natural England has funded 21 **virtual cattle collars** for Staffordshire County Council to enable better conservation grazing of Cannock Chase SSSI.



Battery powered tools purchased with National Landscape funding



Cattle grazing Cemex heathland

Bracken control has been a big issue across heathland sites in recent years – the warmer, wetter conditions providing ideal growing conditions for this invasive fern. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has set up a programme of bracken rolling and bruising across some 40 hectares of its reserves as part of a long-term control programme.

Building a connected network for nature beyond the boundary of the National Landscape is an important way to improve the ecological resilience of the habitats and wildlife within the Chase. Just to the south of the National Landscape, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has secured a new 30 year lease of Bleak House and Cuckoo Bank SSSI, enabling them to continue the restoration of this heathland nature reserve. The Trust has also secured a DEFRA Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier agreement to fund heathland

works on the SSSI over the next 10 years. The Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project has evolved into the **Purple Horizons Nature Partnership**, which has held workshops to co-create an updated vision, outcomes and message houses. The vision is: "From Cannock Chase to Sutton Park, there will be a thriving landscape where heathland and associated habitats are connected, restored and valued by the community." Natural England has prepared a scoping report for the National Landscape team and Staffordshire County Council to help them explore the potential and feasibility of establishing a 'super National Nature Reserve' as a way of delivering integrated land management at a landscape-scale.



Champion Species

We're focusing our conservation efforts on ten of our most threatened and vulnerable plants and animals – our **Champion Species!** Here's what the National Landscape Team and partners have been doing this year.

Cannock Chase supports the only population in Staffordshire of the beautiful **small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly** – but even here its population is small and very vulnerable due to the deterioration and fragmentation of the boggy wet heathland habitat that supports its larval foodplant - the marsh violet. Officers and volunteers from multiple partner organisations have therefore been out surveying and building up a picture of the whereabouts of both the adult butterflies and the marsh violet. The UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) is developing a model to help us predict the suitability of habitats on the Chase for both adults and larvae so we can explore the butterfly's potential to colonise new areas. The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has funded the introduction of 4,600 marsh violet plug plants along the Sher Brook and neighbouring wetlands, helping to increase the potential for the butterfly to move across the landscape.



Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly. Image credit: Steve Welch



Adder conservation work. Image credit: Steve Welch

Conservation efforts by partners for **adders** this year included the creation of hibernacula on multiple reserves and farms to aid overwintering (funded by FiPL), and the removal of trees from adder habitat on Mining Remediation Authority land, organised by the Amphibian and Reptile (ARG) UK Group. A new film to celebrate the adder and the issues it faces was launched titled "**Beneath our feet, an Adders' Eye view**". A PhD study on the effects of recreational disturbance on adders is underway by Kevin Palmer at the University of Chester.

Members of the Adder conservation project

- Amphibian and Reptile Group (ARG) UK
- Cannock Chase District Council
- Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership
- Cannock Chase SAC Partnership
- Cemex
- Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- Forestry England
- Lichfield District Council
- Mining Remediation Authority
- National Trust
- Natural England
- Staffordshire County Council
- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust



A second year of surveying for **nightjar** nests using a drone equipped with a thermal mounted camera has been completed. This technology allows more extensive areas to be surveyed than traditional walking survey techniques.



Nightjar on nest. Image credit: Paul Hopwood

Highlights from 2025 nightjar survey

- 3 nests were located by the drone, all 3 nests had 2 eggs
- 2 of the nests successfully fledged, with 4 chicks
- 1 nest was predated at the egg stage
- 24 new nightjars were ringed

Other conservation work for Champion Species this year:

- **White-clawed crayfish.** 40 crayfish refugia traps for monitoring white-clawed crayfish and invasive signal crayfish have been installed at three locations on the Chase. FiPL funding has supported wetland projects along lengths of the Stony Brook that have included conservation measures such as woody debris dams to encourage this aquatic invertebrate.
- **Common redstart.** The West Midlands Ringing Group has installed 30 nest boxes suitable for redstarts along Sherbrook Valley, with funding from the National Landscape's Sustainable Development Fund.
- **Solitary wasp species of bare ground.** Farming in Protected Landscapes funding has helped landowners create 30 bare earth scrapes on heathlands to encourage a range of rare invertebrate and reptile species.

- **Ancient oak trees.** Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) funding has supported succession planting at a number of sites across the Chase of both the pedunculate and sessile oak to eventually replace ancient trees as they age. The veteran oaks at Brocton Coppice are being protected by halo thinning, and restocking the woodland with native oaks raised from acorns collected on site.
- **Welsh clearwing moth.** In recent years monitoring for this moth has focused on dispersal ecology. Both negative and positive results have been collected from over one hundred survey points in and around the National Landscape, with particular attention on the south of the area to investigate potential links to the Chasewater heaths and *Betula* woodland extending into the West Midlands. The condition and growth stages of *Betula* stands are also being mapped to feed into modelling work aimed at predicting future distribution and abundance over the next 30-40 years. FiPL projects have funded the replacement of successional birch trees in key habitats with known populations of the moth.



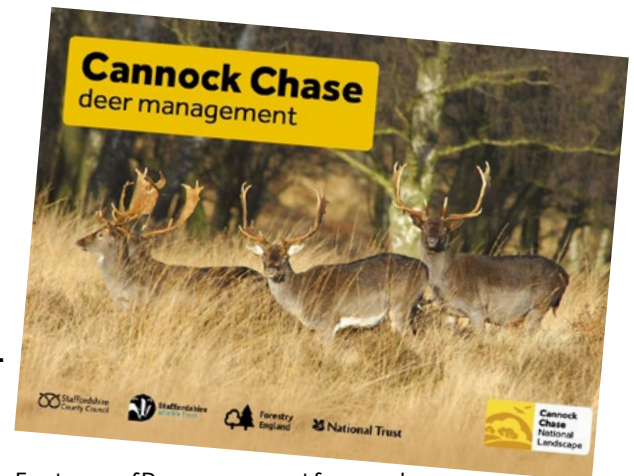
Welsh clearwing moth. Image credit: Steve Welch



Living alongside deer on Cannock Chase

The main public and charitable landowners on Cannock Chase National Landscape are working together to **co-ordinate the management of the wild deer** that live on the Chase. Staffordshire County Council, the National Trust, Forestry England and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, with the Cannock Chase National Landscape Team have agreed a management framework that promotes the welfare and sound management of wild deer, in balance with their habitat, through a collaborative and co-ordinated approach.

Our local deer herds are an attractive and characteristic feature of the Cannock Chase landscape. Catching glimpses of them can be a wonderful and memorable experience. However, the presence of deer near roads, on farmland, in nature reserves, in woodlands with young trees, and in gardens can bring issues for both deer and people. In the absence of natural predators, deer populations have expanded rapidly over the past few years, reaching numbers that cannot be sustained to the detriment of the environment and the health of the animals themselves. The **management framework** will co-ordinate the work of partners to sustain a healthy deer population that is in balance with the environment.



Front cover of Deer management framework



Fallow deer on Cannock Chase



Other Nature news in brief



Red wood ant translocation work

A few small colonies of the rare **Red Wood Ant** survive on Cannock Chase, but are vulnerable to disturbance. The ant is known for its large, conspicuous nests of twigs and conifer needles in forests. Thanks to the efforts of Andy Jukes of Conops Entomology, the landowner - Staffordshire County Council, and Cannock Chase National Landscape 3 nests have been translocated to safer locations and measures have been put in place to protect those that have been left in situ.

Bats are being given a helping hand at various sites across the Chase with the installation of over 30 individual, colony and maternity roosting boxes. To improve the knowledge of bat populations and behaviours on their various sites, Cannock Chase District Council Countryside Team has purchased bat detectors with National Landscape funding. The detectors will also be used for bat guided walk events. Meanwhile, Farming in Protected Landscape funding has supported the installation of 5 ultrasonic bat detectors across Cannock Chase Country Park, that will provide clues to the behaviour and presence of different bat species.



Bat box being installed

FiPL funding has also supported: ring-barking trees at Slitting Mill to create standing deadwood habitat for **lesser spotted woodpecker**; planting male and female **black poplar** trees at Little Haywood (one of Britain's most endangered native tree species); creating woody debris dams in woodland streams for the vulnerable **Log Jammer Hoverfly**; the creation of a 180m butterfly corridor with glades, and planting 700 wildflower plug plants and 3kg of wildflower seeds to increase connectivity and expansion between known **Dingy Skipper** populations.

Invasive non-native species can be harmful to native plants and animals on the Chase, and land managers work hard to control or eradicate a number of problematic species such as, Himalayan balsam, Spanish bluebell and Japanese knotweed. This year Staffordshire County Council rangers removed an impressive 1,100m² of rhododendron and cherry laurel at RAF Hednesford in Cannock Chase Country Park with funding through the FiPL programme.

Natural England has provided specialist **geological advice on the management of Milford Quarry SSSI**, and also took **enforcement action** to prevent damage to fungi caused by unauthorised mushroom harvesting in the National Landscape.

Cannock Chase Council has prepared a **new management plan for Nunswell Park**, near Cannock Wood.



Slowing the flow

Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) pods have been installed by Staffordshire County Council Flood Risk Management team at 14 properties in the catchment of Cannock Chase, with National Landscape funding.

SuDS pods provide a nature-based approach to managing surface water. In addition to reducing runoff entering local sewers and watercourses, they deliver wider environmental benefits. Unlike traditional water butt systems, the pods incorporate a planted area, allowing for the integration of vegetation and supporting biodiversity. The pods are designed to capture rainwater directly from roof drainage systems. Water is temporarily stored and passes through the system over a minimum period of approximately 20 minutes, helping to attenuate peak flows. The integrated planting area can support a wide variety of damp-tolerant species and can even accommodate edible plants such as, strawberries!



SuDS pods

Protecting peat



Coring for peat

Field surveys for the presence of **peat** in the Trent-Sow floodplain were carried out this year following on from the desktop assessment of peatland deposits/peaty soils on the Chase completed in 2024/25. Somewhat disappointingly there appears to be little peat formation across the site, although much of the survey area remained flooded and so still may yet yield localised peat deposits when surveyed in detail in the future. At the same time, a **paleoenvironmental study** of known peatland in the Sherbrook Valley has been carried out. Preliminary analysis suggests the area has got wetter towards the present day, and the vegetation has changed from mixed deciduous woodland through alder carr to much more open habitat.

A **small-scale peat survey** was also commissioned as part of a Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) funded project at a site within Fair oak Valley. The subsequent report recommended that the site would benefit from further rewetting to conserve the existing peat resource and help with peat formation processes – the creation of woody dams on the site will help with this.



River restoration. Image credit: Victoria Bunter

Restoring wetlands

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has led the **transformation of the Trent floodplain** at Duck Covert on the National Trust's Shugborough Estate, creating a healthier wetland habitat and increasing the area's capacity to store water. The restoration was funded jointly by the HS2 Environmental Enhancement Fund, Environment Agency and Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme, with the agreement and support of the National Trust. The project involved widening the river channel, softening the steep riverbanks, and creating shallow scrapes and pools within the floodplain. These improvements will provide vital benefits for wildlife, supporting fish, insects, birds, and mammals such as, otters. It will also help the habitat be more effective at storing carbon and slowing the flow of the River Trent.

This project lies adjacent to land downstream at Navigation Farm, Little Haywood where Farming in Protected Landscape funding supported another wetland restoration scheme, and near to floodplain enhancement works at Weston and Rugeley – providing landscape-scale action to address the impacts of climate change.

Video here [Trent and Sow drone footage from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust](#)



Other Climate news in brief

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust volunteers have planted **6,500 Sphagnum moss plugs** to restore and protect mire habitat at Gentleshaw Common, with funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme. The plants will slow and hold water flow, as well as help to suppress purple moor-grass, encouraging the spread of specialist plants like sundews and bog asphodel. FiPL funding has also supported the provision of **5 fire-fighting portable 'water' backpacks and drone training for reserve officers** to address fires and aid land management in collaboration with the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service. Together with ongoing heathland restoration and the removal of 3 hectares of scrub vegetation, this combination of measures will help to improve resilience against fires that devastated the reserve in April 2025.



Sphagnum moss plugs being planted



Tree/hedgerow planting, Hazelmoor Farm, Slitting Mill

Shugborough, and 33 native fruit trees have been planted at RAF Hednesford - where hazel planting is ongoing to develop a rotational hazel coppice.

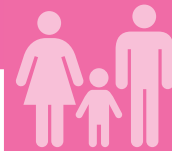
FiPL has also supported a number of **projects that will protect and create new wetland habitat and help to slow water flow**. Farmers have also been protecting watercourses from livestock by installing fencing and providing alternative water provision such as, the installation of piped drinking troughs for cattle, goats and horses at multiple farms.



New fencing protecting watercourses

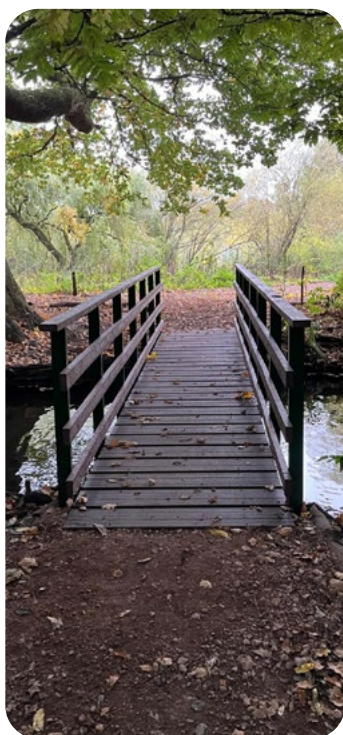
Trees take carbon out of the atmosphere and lock it up for centuries, and planting more trees and woodlands is one of the most effective ways to tackle the climate crisis.

This year the **Farming in Protected Landscapes programme** supported farmers and landowners to restore or plant 3.5 kms of hedgerows, and plant nearly 650 trees. Cannock Chase Council planted 315 standard-sized trees into Council-owned sites, whilst at Cannock Chase Country Park a 4 hectare site destroyed by fire has been replanted with 100 trees, supported by the Forest of Mercia. Elsewhere, the National Trust has created a 2 acre orchard at



Access for All

Since 2022 Defra's **Access for All programme** has helped National Landscapes and National Parks across England to improve accessibility for people of all ages and abilities and from all backgrounds. This year we have used some of our funding allocation to support landowners to remove barriers and make their sites more accessible.



New pedestrian bridge at Wolseley Centre



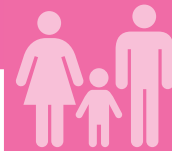
Guided ranger walk

Highlights of Access for All funding

- Resurfacing 77 metres of the RAF Hednesford Trail at Cannock Chase Visitor Centre
- Installation of steps at Milford Common
- Replacing a pedestrian bridge at Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Wolseley Centre
- Accessible demonstration beds, signage and interpretation and a viewing bench in the new Arcadia Forest Garden on the National Trust's Shugborough Estate
- Purchase of a spotting scope and binoculars for ranger-led guided walks at Cannock Chase Country Park

Partners have been busy actively working to improve access to nature on a range of other projects throughout the National Landscape:

- The National Trust has increased the number of **accessible gates and benches** across the Shugborough Estate, including a marked step-free route in the gardens.
- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, with funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has improved **waymarking and accessibility along a 1.1 km route** on its Gentleshaw Common reserve, with a bench providing views of the reserve half-way round.
- Staffordshire Ramblers have installed **footpath marker posts and waymarking disks** (60-75 in the last 12 months), whilst ensuring that the routes are cleared of undergrowth and low tree branches. The group also undertook 30 yards of **path re-surfacing at Colwich and Brindley Heath**.
- Cannock Chase Council alongside partners Together Active, Hednesford Town Council and Staffordshire County Council have continued to deliver the **Cannock Chase Wayfinding project** to encourage people's connections with nature through physical path improvements between Hednesford and Cannock Chase Visitor Centre, wayfinding tools and enhanced digital content. The route includes a number of rest stops due to be installed in 2026.
- Cannock Chase Council has continued delivering **inclusive biking** sessions at Cannock Chase Visitor Centre for schoolchildren with inclusive needs. The Council is also taking the Chase to those children and adults who can't get out and about through its innovative '**Pedal power**' project which enables them to cycle indoors along to videos of the Chase with pop-ups of animals and facts about the area.



Understanding the Chase

Sharing the stories of the Chase can improve people's understanding of the area and foster pro-environmental behaviours. Access for All funding has supported **new interpretation panels** and noticeboards on Cannock Chase Council countryside sites at Hednesford Hills (4 panels) and Hazelslade (1 panel), and at Beaudesert Outdoor Activity Centre, where 9 new panels bring to life the history of Beaudesert Hall and grounds. The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has supported 2 new panels focused on farming and the environment at Navigation Farm in the Trent Valley, a panel on woodland birds on the RAF Hednesford Trail, and 4 waymarker signs and 3 information boards at Gentleshaw Common SSSI promoting a new accessible route on the site.



Launch of Beaudesert Hall interpretation panels

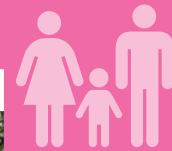
Face-to-face engagement with visitors is another key way to encourage responsible behaviours. Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) **Engagement Wardens** were out and about on the Chase again in the spring and summer meeting and greeting walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

The SAC Team also attended over **70 engagement events** during the year, including school assemblies and activities. Partners have encouraged more participation by families, individuals and children at a range of different events during the year including Heath Week, World Ranger Day, Insectfest, a Mini Bio-Blitz, wellbeing walks, and fungi, dawn chorus, bat and other guided walks. FiPL funding also enabled **12 farm visits** by 10 schools from within the National Landscape and the wider region. These have supported creative arts and farm-and-food related lessons for children who don't have access to green spaces or have additional learning or complex medical needs that require support.



Dog campaign poster

An ongoing **dog campaign** led by the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership includes messaging to 'bag & bin at home'. Three temporary banners were out on site during the summer encouraging visitors to clean up after their dog. Dog calendars reinforcing the message that dogs should be kept on leads to protect wildlife during the breeding season were also handed out to owners.



Visualisations of new gateway designs

Visitor infrastructure

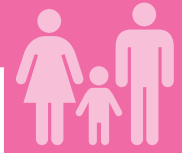
As part of our objective to deliver high-quality visitor infrastructure across the National Landscape, we have been looking at design options for new **road gateway signs** at strategic access points. The current wooden totems that welcome drivers are now 20 years old and deteriorating, and create a poor impression of the National Landscape. The preferred design for the new signs in corten steel resonates with the local landscape, geology, vegetation and industrial history and is consistent with the new National Landscape brand. Investing in new signs will provide a clear and consistent welcome, benefitting our wonderful nationally protected landscape, and reminding people that it should be enjoyed with care and respect. The manufacture and installation of the first phase of new signs will be progressed during 2026/27.



Car park entrance signs

The National Landscape and Cannock Chase SAC Partnership have also supported Staffordshire County Council to replace **entrance signage at 10 car parks** across Cannock Chase Country Park. The materials and colours of the new signs similarly create clear links to the local landscape and heritage, matching the style of the proposed new gateway signs and interpretation panels being installed across the Chase.

During the year Staffordshire County Council has continued to develop plans for a new **Discovery Centre** at Marquis Drive, whilst the National Trust's preparations for new **visitor infrastructure** at Shugborough is well underway.



Other People news in brief



Hedgelaying training for volunteers

Volunteers continue to support the National Landscape, working with a range of partner organisations. Over 5,000 hours have been clocked up by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust volunteers this year helping with heathland restoration on Gentleshaw Common, and at the Wolseley Centre. Volunteers have also played an important role in habitat restoration work on a number of projects supported through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, for example, with the National Trust at Haywood Park Farm and Staffordshire Countryside Rangers at Cannock Chase Country Park. Volunteers on

Cannock Chase Council countryside sites have contributed another 710 hours. Volunteers at the Great War Hut contributed a total of 1047 volunteer hours opening the Hut all year round and providing a warm welcome to all visitors, sharing information about Cannock Chase during the Great War. HART, the National Trust's Heritage and Archaeology Rangers Team, is an exciting volunteer initiative the National Trust has set up this year on the Shugborough Estate to help improve understanding of the archaeology sites in its care. Staffordshire County Council's Chase Through Time volunteers have undertaken condition surveys of a number of designated heritage assets, including the saucer barrow at Spring Hill, Castle Ring hillfort and the Messines Model.

Cannock Chase Council has been encouraging the next generation of conservation land managers, with **work experience** students and students from Walsall College working alongside countryside staff on their various sites, and investing over 300 hours whilst learning ecological and management skills.

The **art installation** created by local artist Jennifer Collier at our 2025 Annual Conference has been on display at various venues around the Chase including the Cannock Chase Visitor centre at Marquis Drive and local libraries. The paper trees convey in words, maps and images what a 'wild and beautiful, distinctive, thriving, resilient and welcoming National Landscape' looked like to the conference delegates.

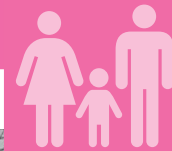


Art installation at Cannock Library

In partnership with the Diocese of Lichfield, **6 churches on the Chase** have been supported to help them achieve eco-church status with the purchase of benches, compost bins, nest boxes and wildlife boxes.

The National Landscape's Sustainable Development Fund supported the **Take the Lead: Guardians of Cannock Chase** project run by The Friends of Hednesford Park. The project worked with 4 different Scout groups in the Chase District to get their first Future Guardians of Cannock Chase (FGoCC) Badge. Scout and Youth Group Leaders were also shown how to deliver the project in 4 workshops, using the work produced to display a community art project that promoted the Cannock Chase Code and the Future Guardians initiative.

People



The Future Guardians programme and resources continue to be promoted by Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Operation Officers with DofE Licensed Organisations and DofE Managers across the Midlands, encouraging the use of Cannock Chase for activities. Approximately 100 young members of Girlguiding Staffordshire completed the challenge pack in the past year. Two training days to scout leaders and DofE staff were delivered by SAC officers.

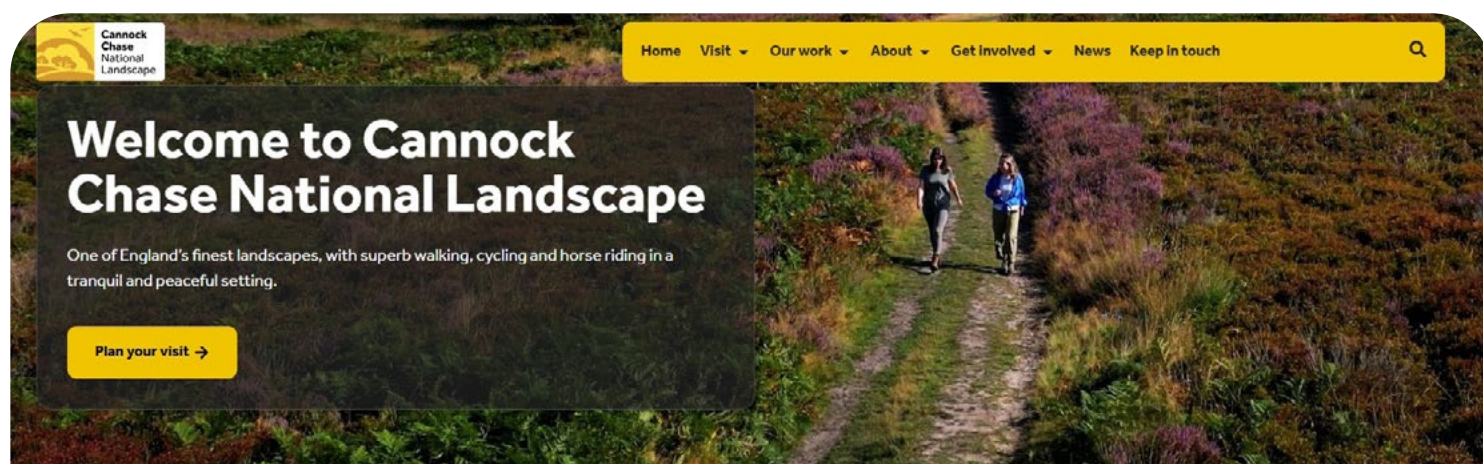
Community groups have been involved in co-producing the content for a **series of digital trails** accessed through QR codes on the Cannock Chase Can app that include – Nature and Wildlife, Mining Heritage, Military Heritage and Wellbeing.



Hednesford Valley High working on Guardians of Cannock Chase programme
Image credit: Lynn Evans

A total of 14 issues on **Public Rights of Way (PRoW)** within the National Landscape have been resolved during the past year by Staffordshire County Council's PRoW team, Staffordshire Ramblers and landowners. The issues included obstructions, missing waymarking, and poor condition of surfaces and fingerposts.

The National Landscape Team has refreshed the **Cannock Chase National Landscape website**, making it more accessible and incorporating our new branding style. Together with our social posts and newsletter it is the main way for people to keep in touch with the National Landscape. 14 editions of our newsletter were issued during the year to our 2310 subscribers, with an impressive 38% open rate.



Plan your visit

Here you will find lots of information to help you make the most of your visit to Cannock Chase National Landscape. Click into any of the sections below to find out more.

How to get here

Maps

Places to visit

Visitor Hubs



Improved canal towpath. Image credit: Canal and River Trust

HS2

The Trent Sow Parklands and Cannock Chase AONB HS2 Group formally wound up its work in December 2025. The route of HS2 Phase 2a crossed the Trent Valley just to the north of the AONB through a collection of notable historic designed landscapes, river floodplains, conservation areas, listed buildings and environmental designations. The Group, comprising local partners with an independent Chairperson, was set up in October 2018 to ensure the careful design of the substantial engineering works and to develop environmental enhancement measures to mitigate the harm. Although HS2 Phase 2a was cancelled in September 2023, the programme of environmental enhancement measures continued, creating a strong legacy of improved habitats, landscapes and heritage assets.

Highlights of the HS2 Environmental Fund

- £1.5 million investment
- 5 projects funded
- 80 hectares habitats created/restored
- 2.44 km of river restored
- 3.75 km of improved canal towpath access
- 3 historic paths restored
- 16,900 hedgerow shrubs and trees planted
- Historic structures restored



Chinese House, Shugborough Estate Gardens



Chase past, present and future

A new **Historic Environment Strategy** has been prepared for the National Landscape with the support of the County Archaeologist, local authority conservation officers, and community groups.



Front cover of Strategy

Cannock Chase has a rich heritage of national importance. Its archaeological, historic and cultural remains are fundamental to its distinctive character, sense of place and natural beauty. 'Chase past, present and future' sets out a framework for understanding, enjoying and caring for our heritage assets, and includes an ambitious portfolio of 47 projects that we would like to develop over the coming years. Four thematic story strands telling the story of human activity on the Chase will help to target and co-ordinate the delivery of the projects: The Thrill of the Chase; Home is where the Heath is; Making a Living and; The Chase at War.

Farming in Protected Landscapes

The Defra-funded **Farming in Protected Landscapes programme** (FiPL) continues to help deliver for nature, climate, people and place across the National Landscape. In 2025/26 we allocated £379,008 of grants to 17 projects, supporting individual landowners, farms and collaborative work with multiple partners and organisations across 4,500 hectares. Activities include everything from planting and restoring hedgerows and other farmland features, wetland restoration and new wetland creation, species conservation, bird surveys, access improvements, interpretation panels, farm education visits, farmer/and owner training events and courses and livestock (including horse) management.



Landowner at Gentleshaw with new gate and planted trees

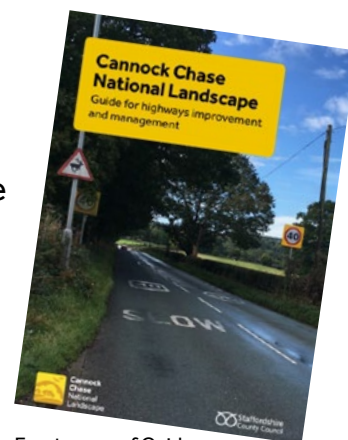
Highlights of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

- 3.5 km of new and restored hedgerows
- 646 trees planted
- 93 wildlife boxes
- 15 wildlife hibernacula created
- 15 farm education visits
- 7 interpretation panels
- 4 land manager training events
- 7 wetland projects



Other Place news in brief

Working with Staffordshire County Council, the National Landscape Team has updated the **Guide for Highways Improvement and Management** on the Chase. The Guide seeks to ensure that the environmental impacts of highways and the ways in which they are maintained and improved, are sympathetic to the natural beauty of the National Landscape.



Front cover of Guide

Expressions of interests for **undergrounding three overhead powerlines** in the National Landscape totalling 3.3kms have been submitted to National Grid. If successful, the undergrounding will remove poles and cables, improving the visual amenity of the National Landscape for residents and visitors. The feasibility and benefits of each scheme are now being assessed.

Funded by the National Landscape and organised by the Staffordshire branch of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England with the help of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, the **2026 Dark Skies event** took place at the Wolseley Centre on 25th February. Led by "Fern and Fables", a group of Fradley Beavers enjoyed a night of creatively exploring the importance of protecting our dark skies through crafts, storytelling and exploring our landscape on a night-time walk with bat detectors.

Forestry England, with Historic England advice, has produced a **Management Plan for the Great War training trench system Scheduled Monument** on its land, which involves objectives to increase engagement. Staying with the military theme, the National Trust has been **recording a water tower** from the Second World War on the Shugborough Estate. Staffordshire County Council's Chase Through Time volunteers have undertaken condition surveys of several non-designated heritage assets including areas in and around Gentleshaw Common, Castle Ring, Brocton Coppice, Moor's Gorse, RAF Hednesford, Beaudesert Old Park, Brocton Camp and Milford Common.



Dark Skies event

National Landscape finances 2025/2026

Expenditure

Staff and associated costs ¹	£173,559
Other 'core' costs ²	£14,486
Partnership running costs ³	£9,000
Sustainable Development Fund ⁴	£3,104
National Landscape projects ⁵	£7,995
Access for All projects ⁶	£112,787
Capital projects ⁷	£141,180
Total	£462,111

¹Salaries, training expenses and travel and subsistence for the National Landscape Team.

²Other 'core' costs include office equipment, national liaison, print and publicity, annual conference, core activities.

³This is paid to our host authority Staffordshire County Council in return for services such as, management, HR, Finance and IT support.

⁴This supports community projects that contribute towards the purpose and aims of the National Landscape.

⁵Projects undertaken by the National Landscape Team and partners that help to deliver priorities in the AONB Management Plan.

⁶This includes expenditure on Access for All funded projects.

⁷This includes expenditure on 30by30 projects, and projects that deliver innovation.

Funded by

Defra Core Grant	£158,944
Defra Capital Grant	£141,180
Defra Access for All	£112,787
Staffordshire County Council	£24,600
Cannock Chase Council	£9,840
Stafford Borough Council	£9,840
Lichfield District Council	£2,460
South Staffordshire Council	£2,460
Total	£462,111

Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

Expenditure	
Programme administration	£41,545
Programme advice and guidance	£65,625
Programme advice and guidance (admin fee)	£5,000
Project spend (grants to farmers)	£379,008
Total	£491,178
Funded by	
Defra ⁸	£491,178

⁸Funding from Defra for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is separate from the Defra core funding allocation for Cannock Chase National Landscape.



Cannock Chase National Landscape Team

Team Leader: Ian Marshall

Land Management Officer: Richard Harris

Communications Officer: Samantha Hall (part-time)

Farming in Protected Landscape Officer: Claire Geoghegan

Farming in Protected Landscape Officer: Karen Davies (part-time)



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Please **sign up here** to find out the latest news from the National Landscape

Cannock Chase NL is supported by: Defra, Cannock Chase District Council, Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire District Council, Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Forestry Commission England, Natural England, Historic England, National Trust, RSPB, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, British Horse Society, Cemex UK Operations Ltd, Country Land and Business Association, CPRE Staffordshire, Friends of Cannock Chase, Hanson Aggregates, National Farmers' Union, Ramblers, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, Walton Chasers, West Midland Bird Club.