

Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Annual Review 2021/22



Chair's Foreword

The long shadow of COVID has been cast across the period of this review, much as it did in the previous year. On the positive side it has made us appreciate the value of beautiful countryside, and the benefits it brings to the human mind and body.

January this year saw the government's response to the Landscape Review of 2018. The tone was positive on protected landscapes and they were seen as crucial to meeting the government's commitments on the environment and its relationship to nature and people.

Later on, in March, the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership published its Nature Recovery Plan which gives a broad view of all the issues affecting nature across the designation and prioritises positive actions.

To turn words into action, the government has also funded a new programme, Farming in Protected Landscapes, which has brought both funds and advice to landowners in the area. It is supervised by the AONB team, and Sash Warden arrived in the summer to run this three year programme.

This is the last year of the Facilitation Fund, which brings landowners together to learn about and take action on cross border issues. It's been seen as so successful, and in turn is so necessary to the future of nature in the area that it will be continued, by other means. We are grateful to Charlotte Vincent for all the work she's put into that.

The AONB team remains small, but very flexible in its approach to the range of projects it undertakes, as you can see within the rest of this review. It looks forward to reporting on a similar range of interesting Partnership projects next year, that will bring benefits to Nature and the people of this beautiful area.

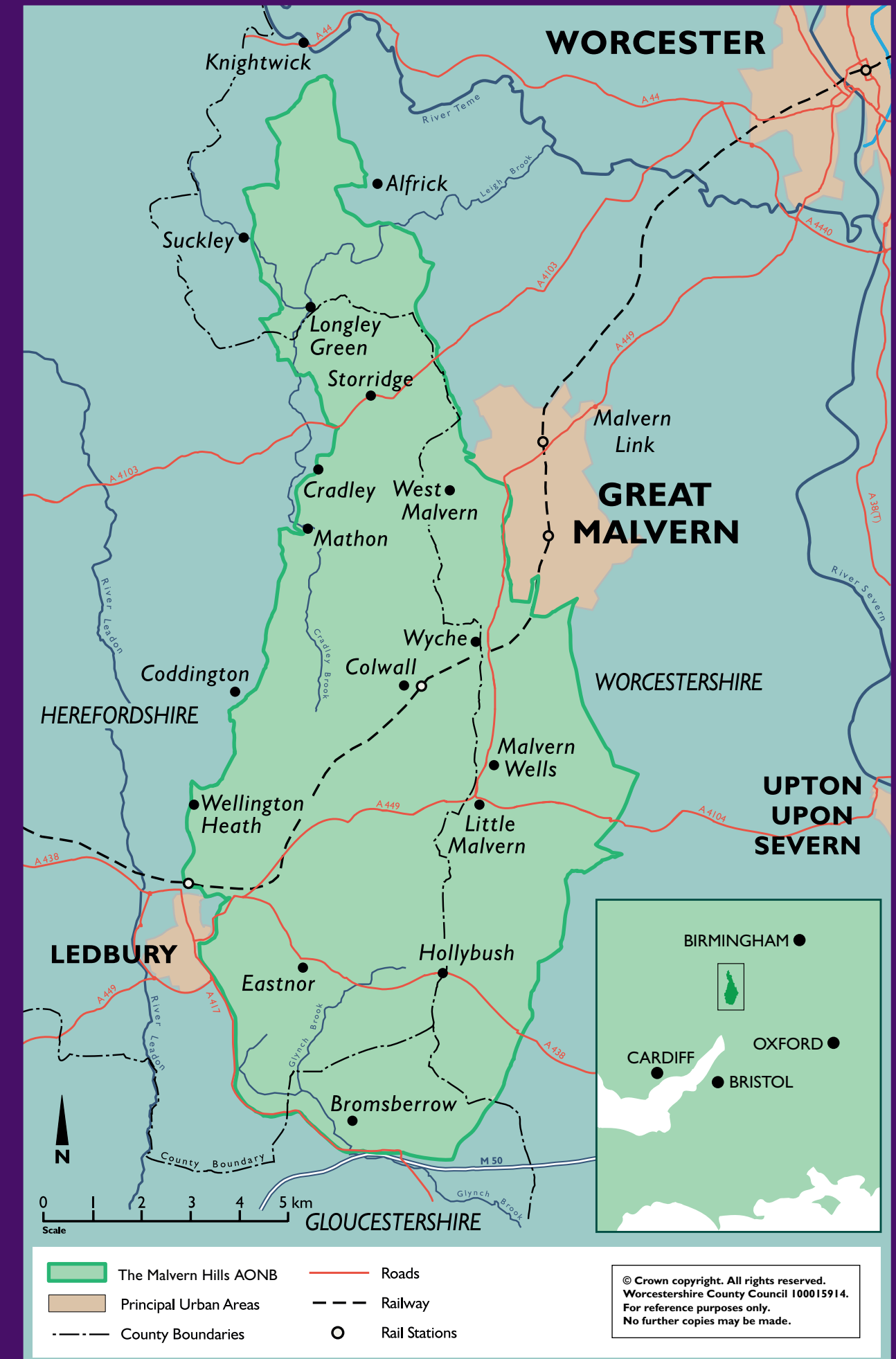


John Raine
Chair, Malvern Hills AONB
Joint Advisory Committee

The AONB Partnership is an umbrella term comprising all of those bodies and individuals that work together to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB. More information on the Partnership can be found at:
www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/aonb-partnership

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Location of the Malvern Hills AONB



An overview of key points



59 ha of habitat conserved for biodiversity.



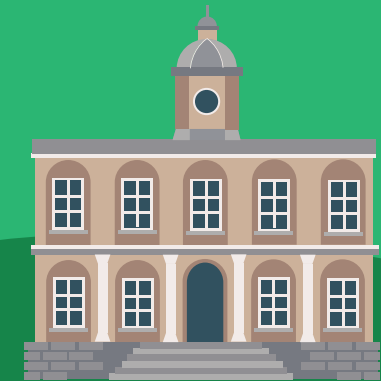
267 people attended AONB events

such as training events for farmers and talks about recent historical finds.

185 planning applications appraised by the AONB Team.



Over £11,000 awarded to 6 projects through the AONB sustainable development fund.



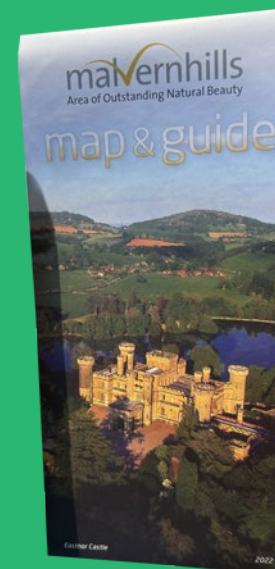
6 Parish/Town councils made a financial contribution to the work of the AONB Partnership

5 draft strategies/plans appraised by the AONB team:

- 2 Neighbourhood Development Plans;
- 1 Local Nature Reserve plan;
- 1 Tourism strategy;
- 1 Recreational impact study.



37 local businesses consulted in the production of our Visitor Map and Guide



£79,000 drawn into the area from external grants, and distributed to landowners to help nature.



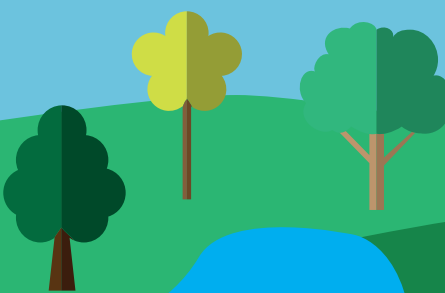
Farming in Protected Landscapes programme started, awarding £72,000 to 8 projects.



106 volunteers actively supported the work of the AONB.




Land management and nature highlights



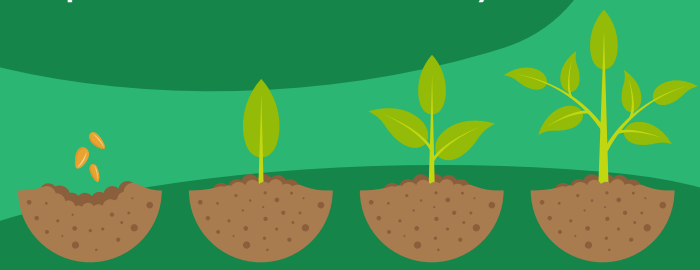
Work began to prepare a Management Plan for the nationally important parkland at Hope End near Ledbury.




Road verge management for wildflowers continued in Little Malvern & Castlemorton.




Pearl Bordered Fritillary Butterfly larvae were hatched ready for their reintroduction to the southern Malvern Hills.



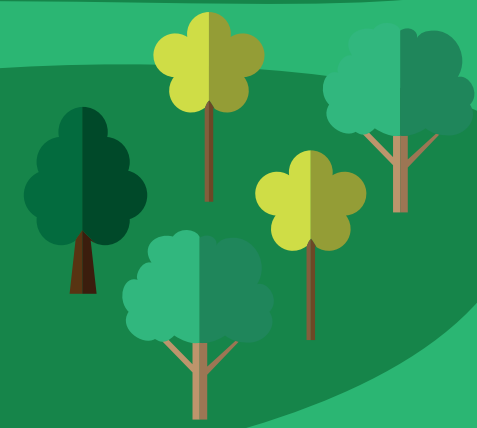
Our first Nature Recovery Plan was produced to help halt and reverse the loss of nature in the area.




After 4 years, funding to run the Facilitation Group of landowners in the south of the AONB ended. We started a new AONB-wide group. 35 landowners joined.




72 land owners and managers attended 9 training events.



4 woodland management plans were produced.



5.5 ha of wild flower meadows were restored at 3 sites.



100 ha of grassland across 15 holdings surveyed for plant interest.



185m of new hedgerow planted.



The Farming In Protected Landscapes Scheme started giving advice and grants to people within the area.

People and place highlights

A 'zoom' planning information session was 'held for MHDC Councillors and planning staff.'

Comments made on 2 Neighbourhood Development Plans.

South Worcestershire Development Plan Review:
We worked with key partners to document the impacts of recreation on the Malvern Hills and how these might change with future housing growth.



Geosite Volunteers:
18 volunteers helped to restore four geologically important sites within the AONB boundary.

Together with Colwall Parish Council we improved and reprinted the popular Colwall Footpaths map and made it available on a phone app.



Barton Ct History talks: having published a book on one of our ancient estates, two full house talks were given on all the discoveries.



Eastnor Park Interpretation boards were grant aided, to explain the features of the park to the visitor.



Movement in the Landscape:
a short contemporary dance film was made about the restorative powers of landscape during Covid.



Landowners Group demonstrations. The group met regularly to learn about new ideas in agriculture and conservation: in this case a better way of cutting hedges.



Unearthing Mathon's history was a talk and display of the many unusual artefacts that had been found buried in Mathon's soil



Harcourt Tower: Using old maps and magnetometry, the site of the tower was found. It was here that in C19, ball lightning killed and maimed those sheltering in it.

An update and reprint was done of our Visitor Map and Guide to all the activities you can do in the area.



Farming in Protected Landscapes

This year saw the start of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, funded by DEFRA with the aim of providing additional support to Protected Landscapes to conserve and enhance their designations. Sash Warden is now employed as the project officer and £72,000 of grants were awarded to 8 projects.

471 metres of new hedgerow were planted as wildlife corridors, connecting wooded areas near the Malvern Hills. New native field trees were planted and a pond was restored as part of the same scheme.



New stock handling and housing infrastructure supported a shift to regenerative grazing with cattle in Suckley.



Orchard and meadow management equipment was purchased to support volunteer engagement in Colwall.



A very old cherry orchard was brought back to life with the planting of 40 new trees.



A traditional orchard and meadow were restored in Alfrick.



Hope End, a registered park, now has a management plan



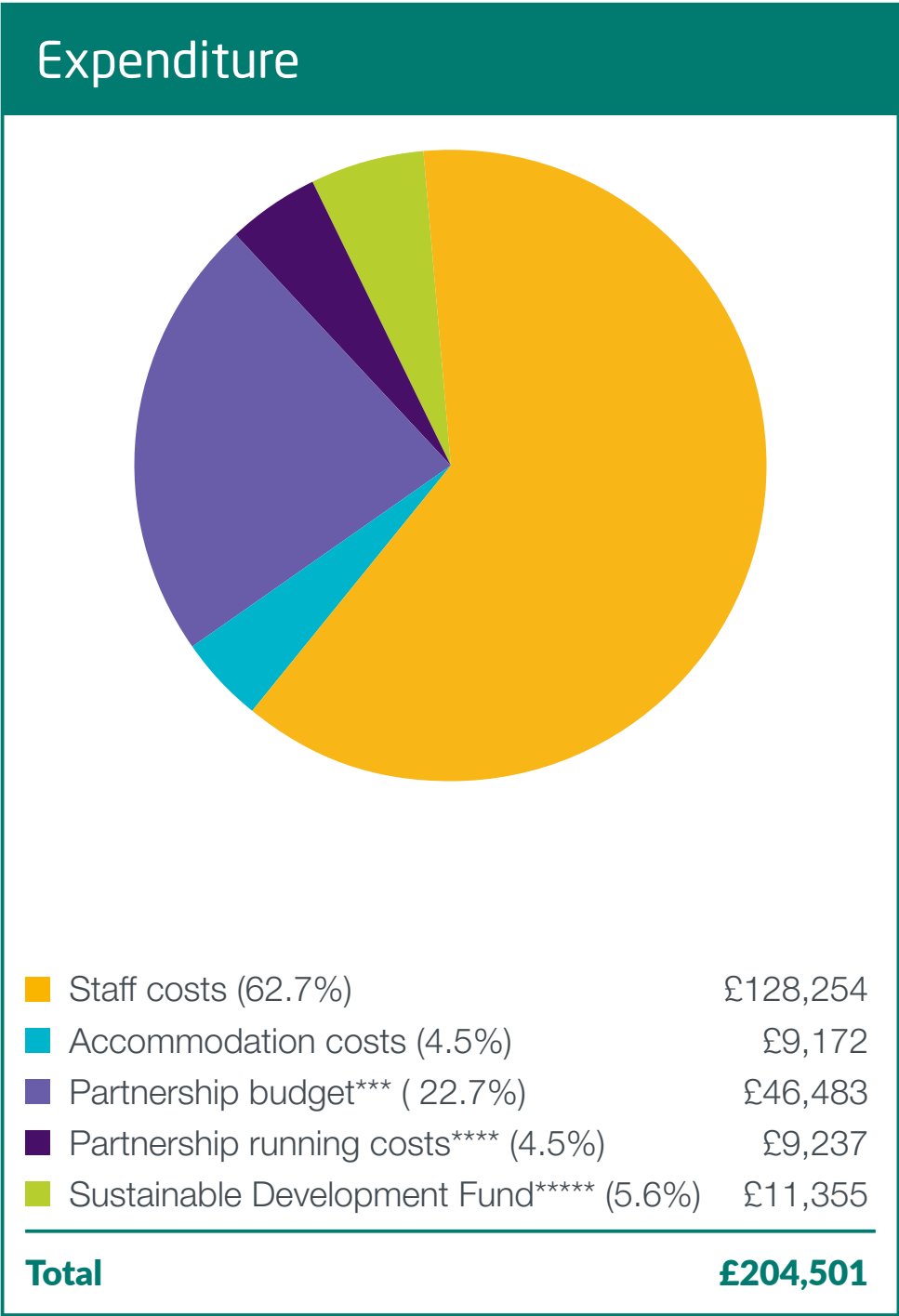
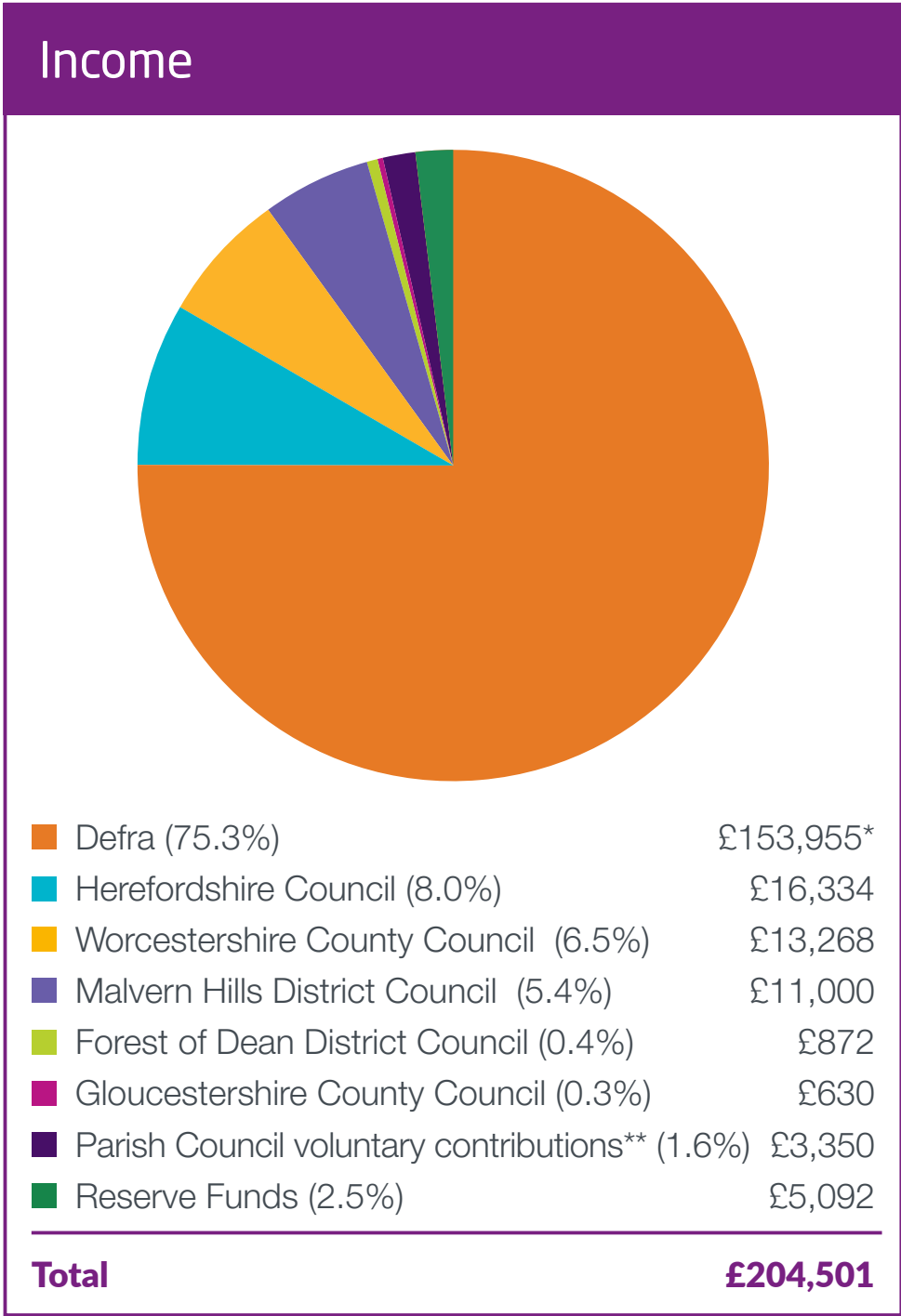
80 heritage fruit trees were planted in 5 traditional orchards in Colwall.



A Brush Seed Harvester was bought to collect wild flower seed for sowing elsewhere.



AONB Unit Financial Structure



Additional project income
(and expenditure)

Malvern Hills Facilitation Fund	£7,633
Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme	£90,014
Total	£97,647

- * Includes £2,642 from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
- ** Warm thanks to the Parish Councils of Colwall, Cradley, Malvern Wells, Little Malvern and Welland, West Malvern and Wellington Heath.
- *** This supports a wide variety of projects undertaken by partners and the AONB unit.
- **** This is paid to our host authority, Worcestershire County Council in return for services such as HR, Finance and IT Support.
- ***** This supports projects that bring economic, social and environmental benefits in the AONB.

The Unit staff structure for the year was as follows

AONB Partnership Manager – Paul Esrich

Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer—Sash Warden

AONB Partnership Assistant Managers (job share) -
Karen Humphries and David Armitage

Facilitation Fund Officer—Charlotte Vincent

The following bodies provide core grant support to the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership:



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